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THE WORD

BY THE

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THE WORD

I

INTRODUCTION

WHAT is the occasion of my writing this? What is the subject? To whom am I addressing myself? What is it that I hope to do? I might ask more questions, but let these be enough for my present purpose, which is to put myself in proper relation with my readers. To take my matter first, it is nothing less than the being, the character, and the spiritual operations of Almighty God. I am addressing myself to those who believe there is such a God, that is a God whose character we can understand, and with whom we are in personal relation. Specially am I addressing myself to those tenderly described as Babes in Christ, the humble, the unlearned, little privileged, little helped, little thought of. I do not deprecate the criticisms of the learned, but neither do I invite them, for I am rather past controversy. Then for the occasion. I am more than half through my eighty-third year, and find my powers of body and mind

continually failing. My one eye can do but little work, and I was never apt at using the aid of the kindest readers or writers. I may wake to-morrow to find the world quite shut out. I have to make up much lost time, and, if possible, do some good work before I die. The world is passing away from me; I have never sufficiently renounced the world, and so the world, thank God, is renouncing me. What is it, then, I hope to do? I hope to gain access to many souls, dear to God and His angels, but seemingly not of much account in this age. Whose fault it is I cannot say, nor is there any occasion why I should say, but in all ages the simpler folk have had little respect or aid from the learned. I hope to give these simple folk some help towards the understanding of Creeds which they are told they must understand if they would be saved, which they do not understand, while few seem to care whether they understand them or not.

It will be objected, Would it not be better to leave these poor souls alone in their ignorant simplicity? Are they not happier and safer in lack of knowledge than in too much of it? I do not think so. To my apprehension there is nothing in the whole Bible to justify the opinion that the 'common people' must be incapable of receiving all saving truth. The Bible is a very easy book to those who are allowed to take the first and most important sense of the words. This generally is a sense directed rather to our moral nature than to our intellect. The difficulties arise

when readers, or students rather, begin to ask the How and the When, the Why and the Wherefore—all perhaps unnecessary and curious questions. Even in conversation or ordinary writing, in order to express the same thing we use very different phrases, which do not strictly mean the same thing. Yet we understand one another, unless we are set upon creating a misunderstanding.

A long and wide experience has assured me that everywhere—in the ranks of industry, and in the remotest corners of the land—there are some who could understand me as well, perhaps better, than I can understand myself; some whose gentle corrections I should have to receive even when I felt most sensible of imparting a gift. My hope is to prove to these simple souls that they are not strangers to the commonwealth of Israel just because they cannot understand some very difficult and quite unscriptural expressions used in Catechisms, Creeds, theological works, and State documents. My hope is to clear their minds in some points from clouds of man's raising. My hope is to enable them to see and hear and feel God and His Son and His Spirit more and more in themselves, in their circumstances, in their regular duties, and in their changing lives.

I have to speak from memory, and memory is apt to dwell on remarkable instances, on interesting cases, on exceptional circumstances and peculiar characters, so I find myself writing as if indeed few

cared to be saved enough to be anxious about the way of salvation. Happily it is not so. Manifold providences bring many recruits to any true shepherd of souls. I have everywhere been invited, sometimes indeed challenged, to explain difficulties that had fixed themselves in the mind, and that for want of help might easily become hindrances. These inquirers have been self-taught people; or invalids, unable to work, but not the less able to meditate and reflect; or persons who had been under influence not friendly to the Church. Whatever I thought or felt in the early days of my ministry, I am now sure that such questions ought to be answered gently, carefully, and fully, and that such a course may prove as beneficial to the questioned as to the questioner. If anybody tells me that such questions are not very common, and that poor people do not care enough about religion to ask questions and seek satisfaction, I must reply that our educated people are generally too fine gentlemen or ladies to put themselves needlessly in communication with the uneducated.

At the risk of seeming to accuse myself while I excuse myself, and of confessing by my apologies my need of apology, I will say more on this point. By a kind of common consent, or what a Roman poet would call the disastrous compacts of party chiefs, the Scriptures are dropping out of the education of all classes. No one who has not made it his business to ascertain for himself can have the least idea how utterly igno-

rant the whole rising generation is of the history, the teaching, the personages, and the words of the Bible. Even our young gentlemen and young ladies know more about any twenty of our best-known novels than they do about a single book in the Old or the New Testament. As for the unhappy millions of children barracooned in our public elementary schools, their case is worse, for they know nothing of the Bible, and what they have instead of it is often more positively bad than the three-volume library novel of the classes above them. Any question I could succeed in raising as to the meaning of sacred words now regarded as if they had no meaning whatever would send old and young, rich and poor, to the Bible. They might not all find what they were looking for, but they would find something—something, maybe, to their souls' good.

Nor am I writing only to Church of England folks. Dissenters of various kinds may not outnumber the Church of England, and they may not have the same sort of learning and culture, but in some towns they have the greatest number of congregations, the largest and the highest in their own esteem. I don't see what harm I can do by introducing them to the questions that most occupied the mind of the Primitive Church, and I hope may do them some good.

I feel conscious of having collected an imaginary and rather medley congregation, such as can seldom meet within the same walls except at the invitation

of some preacher mightier than I could ever pretend to be. But I am only supposing the like of many I have come across, anxious, earnest, simple, and little assisted by friends or books. Some of those I best remember have had that singular poetry and that keen susceptibility which so often go with delicacy of constitution. It is evident I am not supposing them to hold the same views, even on so central a point as the attributes and operations of God for our eternal welfare. I am not even supposing the views of anyone to be always the same or consistent. In all faiths there are tides and fluctuations. I can only hope to be myself uniform and consistent. Should I be found to fail, I can only ask that charity which I am ready to accord to others. I must beg my readers to excuse me if, by force of habit or intrusion of old memories, I slip often unwittingly into the use of the second person, as if my readers were actually before me.

II

THE WORD '*LOGOS*'

WHAT, then, is the subject upon which, after many years of enforced retirement, I am addressing my learned or unlearned readers, and urgently pleading for their serious attention? It is The Word. That seems hardly to stand by itself, some will say. They will ask, the word of what? Of God? True, it is the Word of God. But there has been a remarkable change in the use of the term—that is, of the Greek original. That original is *Logos*. For about eight hundred years, from the beginning of Greek Philosophy to the establishment of Christian Theology, *Logos* was the most important word in literature and in common talk.

When I talk of a controversy lasting for centuries, it will help you to understand what I mean when I observe that for more than fifteen hundred years there has been a controversy on the claims of the Church of Rome to rule all other Churches; for a thousand years there has been a controversy on the claims of the clergy to decide all questions affecting themselves; for more than four centuries we have had controver-

sies on Faith and Works, on the Sacraments, on the Trinity, on Ministerial Orders, and on other points; all the present century we have had controversies on Inspiration, and on the text of the Scriptures.

But long before that long controversy on the *Logos* the word had a certain spiritual and charm-like significance. Homer, who is supposed to have composed his poems eight hundred years before Christ, applies the word to the pleasant conversation of a kind friend nursing a wounded comrade, and also to the pretty talk with which a goddess, or a witch, as we should call her, tries to make a shipwrecked hero forget that he had a good wife at home. The original word and the adjectives and nouns derived from it mean reason, cause, proportion, licence, thought, business, matter, deliberation, argument, study, literature, pulpit, stage in a theatre, oracle, oracular response, sophist or trader in words, orator, scribe, church collection, fable, account, accountant, respectability, common sense, eloquence, history, historians, legends, mere talk, or mere talk as contrasted with the things talked about, verbosity, fighting about words, lying rumours, gossip. All these uses of the word implied something good, something either used or abused, something husbanded or wasted, well directed or ill directed, and becoming consequently either a blessing or a curse, either a benefit or an injury, the root of the whole being something springing up in the heart or in the mind, and directed by the Will into word or deed.

The word thus lay in the heart or the mind, and at the root of all thought, talk, and work. So it came to be used in a philosophical sense. What it meant exactly at first we cannot now say, and as the whole civilised world was disputing about it so long, it came to mean one thing to one mind, another to another. Latterly, however, and by the time the True Word of Life came, the whole civilised world understood one another very fairly when they used the word *Logos*. At least they would say to one another, 'I cannot quite agree with you, but I know what you mean.'

There are many derivatives of the word in our own language. As a termination it means the science of a subject. We have hundreds of words ending in 'ology,' and we go on adding to them as our subjects multiply. In some cases the last letter has been dropped, and then we have the original word by itself. Catalogue means a carefully arranged list. Decalogue means a Law reduced to Ten Commandments. Prologue, Dialogue, Epilogue, are theatrical terms signifying an introductory address throwing some light on the play to be acted, a conversation in the acting of the play, and a farewell address gently touching on the play acted.

A ship's log is such a record of daily observations of wind, weather, currents, soundings, and remarkable incidents as will enable the crew to know where they are, and to justify them in case of a wreck or other mishap. The log of a school should enable the

Inspector to see, by turning over a few leaves, whether the school has been properly conducted during the year under review.

It has sometimes occurred to me that a 'log' of wood means much the same. The carpenter or timber-merchant looks at a standing tree, and after noting its height, bulk, and form, makes a quick calculation of the quantity of good useful timber there will be in the tree when prepared for the saw-pit. This valuable product or economic form of the tree is its 'log,' or a log, as we call it. No Christian can say that this is a comparison unworthy of the subject. The standing tree is in that order of nature which our philosophers are so obstinately defending against the intrusion of a God, and in the 'log' they see only the work of man. But God is there in the tree and in the log, in the squared lump, in the loppings and chippings, speaking to us, comforting us, warning us, and bringing the forest to the cottage hearth, and the Infinite to the heart of man. Nay more, for more it is. Our Lord Himself, during the long period of His obedience at Nazareth, must often have estimated the worth of a standing tree, and reduced it to a 'log.'

You will observe that in all these words, of which *Logos* forms a part, there is a combination of sense, thought, feeling, utterance, and use, upon some matter concerning ourselves and others, and upon some matter which if duly followed up brings us to our Maker and, as we commonly put it, brings our Maker to us. In this

world there is no such thing as a conclusive judgment, no such thing as a last word. There is a perpetual, never-ending appeal to what is still beyond our comprehension. There is a very hackneyed legal expression, 'as at present advised,' and that vulgar limit shuts in all that a man can think for himself, or say to his neighbours, or do for them.

But I have said that by the time our Lord came to His own, all the educated world were fairly and sufficiently agreed on what they meant when they talked of the *Logos*, as they did frequently. Some meant that much of God that came within human sense and feeling. Some meant that which was of God and also of man. Some meant man in God and God in man. I will come by-and-by to the plain necessity that there must be that which I so describe. It had been always, everywhere, apprehended, in many varieties of form and designation. The educated Jews, for instance, especially those who lived at Alexandria and other great Eastern cities, and who laboured to combine the philosophy of Greece and Rome with their own Scriptures and traditions, used in preference the word Sophia, or Wisdom, which they gradually made more and more of a Person. The great Christian Church at Constantinople, now in the hands of the Turks, is Santa Sophia, or the Holy Wisdom of God—that is, the Word of God.

As soon as the Gospel came to be preached outside the Jewish society, it was demanded by the

Gentile hearers, and conceded by the Apostles and Evangelists, that the Gospel must be 'squared,' as we might say, with the great philosophic doctrine of the *Logos*—that is, the Word. What place had Christ in the philosophy of the world? I know some of my readers will say, 'None,' and perhaps they will quote St. Paul. But very early indeed the Church had found that He had His place in it, and to St. John the Evangelist is ascribed the special work and glory of harmonising the two Words, or, rather, of teaching that Christ Himself fulfilled the aspirations of human philosophy, and was the true and living *Logos*. For this he is called the 'Divine'—in Greek the 'Theologian'—that is, the expounder of the *Logos* of God. There has been, and there still is, a vast amount of controversy as to the exact time when the Books ascribed to St. John were written, as to their true authorship, as to how far they are St. John's at all, and whether they truthfully represent his teaching. For my own part, I am persuaded that what we know on these points is enough, and that we shall never know much more.

I must add that I believe the writings that go by the name of St. John most valuable, indeed, if one may say it, indispensable. It was necessary to proclaim to the world the relation between the Gospel and what was then the religious philosophy of the world. This is done not merely in a few passages, but in the general tenor of St. John's Gospel and

Epistles, as, too, in the Apocalypse. Our Lord spoke frequently, plainly, and strongly about the hypocrisies, the traditions, the exaggerations, and the shortcomings of the Jewish sects, but He nowhere said a word about the philosophies of the Gentile world, religious or irreligious, though they were well known and much received in Galilee and Judæa. The time for dealing with them had not yet come.

III

APPEAL TO THE LAY READER

At every step I have to anticipate objections, which I wish to meet all the more because I respect them. Why attempt to revive forgotten controversies, which the world had the good sense to dispose of? What can names and titles signify? Is it not a case in which man himself has given, and man may take away, or let alone, which is better still? Before you dismiss the matter as not worth your consideration, please remember that this question—that is, the meaning of 'the Word,' as we apply the title to our Lord—occupied and divided the Church of Christ for two or three centuries. Some would say two centuries; some would say three, or even four. It was the theological use of the title rather than its simple meaning that occupied the Church. Indeed, it is plain that many of the controversialists quite forgot the character and words and acts of our Lord Himself, in their desire to make what they thought the best theological—or what is called polemical—use of them.

Having done this, as they supposed, effectually and for good, they thought no more about the Word.

They only threw it away, as people usually throw away the material, whatever it is, that they are in the habit of utilising for domestic or commercial purposes. The 'Word' had now become like the refuse from our fire-grates, from our kitchens, from our barn-floors, from our wine-presses and cider-presses, from our laboratories and workshops. Anybody might have it, if only he would take it away out of sight, bury it, burn it, or send it down the stream. Few titles have been so little heard of as the Word now for fifteen hundred years. It had served its time, and the world was glad to be quit of it. Yet, strange to say, this Word was once the most important term in all theology, in all thought, in all history, in the greatest cities and universities—as some cities might then be called.

Why should the title be so prominent, so ever-present for two or three centuries of the Church, and then so shoved into a corner, so wilfully forgotten, for the ensuing fifteen centuries? Surely we ought to be able to answer this question, and surely, too, what it was once of the utmost importance to know cannot be a matter of complete indifference now. I myself think those Greek, and Jewish, and Christian philosophers were very usefully employed in attempting to make out the full meaning of the Word. Nor can I believe that matters have so changed that an employment once serious and profitable should be now frivolous and barren. Nothing in the annals of the

human race can be more striking than the perseverance with which many hundreds of scholars and divines pursued Truth in the midst of wars, revolutions, migrations, and all kinds of evils, which ever seemed to threaten the wreck of all things.

Before I advance a step further in the matter of this volume, I must explain to my humbler readers the very moderate extent of my design. I shall have to assure them that, while there is much that they may know, and even learn for themselves, there will yet remain mysteries which they can never fathom, and which it would be presumptuous for them, or anybody, to dive into. The wise and prudent of the world, if they have read so far, will say, 'Oh, here is a man who admits he is neither a theologian nor a philosopher, undertaking to answer questions that have baffled all the Schools and Churches! It can only end in one more failure!' I think they are justified in expecting me to fail—indeed, to fail egregiously—if I attempt to give a completely satisfactory answer to all the questions that can reasonably occur to me. Any simpleton can put a question that any number of wise men cannot answer. Any child can puzzle his elders. Yet wise men and elders do their best to answer questions, if it be only to fail. It is a very important fact, and has to be taken well into account, that man can entertain questions, that he can ask questions, that he can earnestly, and, indeed, ambitiously, desire to answer them, and that he

should not be easily satisfied with the answers given by other people.

In all ages theologians, groaning, as it were, under their own sense of continual failure, have felt a certain natural consolation in detecting and exposing the failures of others. Their usual verdict on any new adventurer is that he holds some half-truths, and a good many whole untruths. It is a judgment easy to pronounce, and only too likely to be quite true. Indeed, I think we had all best make up our minds to be more or less at fault in our conceptions as to spiritual affairs—quite wrong about many things, and with only faint glimpses of the truth in the rest. So I must again beg my friends to observe that I am not attempting to solve the great difficulties of my subject ; on the contrary, I am content to leave real difficulties as they are.

I ask my friends to teach themselves ; to study their own hearts and minds, and that invisible world which every one of us carries in himself, and to search the Scriptures, comparing text with text. I shall be told that I am only sowing for a new crop of errors, inasmuch as half-educated people must and will blunder fearfully in such a subject. The blunders exist already, and, so far as I see, abound quite as much in the Church of England as in any other Christian community. Indeed, in the multitude of conflicting opinions, I cannot myself pretend to say which is the blunder and which is not. If, for

example, I find twenty theologians charging twenty other theologians with Socinianism, and the second twenty retorting, 'No, it's you who are the Socinians, and we who are orthodox,' the particular point at issue being one quite beyond our comprehension, I find myself unwilling to condemn either the first twenty or the second, and therefore conclude that God only can know which is in the right, or, rather, which is the nearer to the right—i.e. the least wrong.

But there is that which is worse than error. There is a mass of indifference, practical unbelief, and even contempt for religious truth. Many people are continually told that the clergy adopt the opinions that will help them on in this world—the opinions recognised by the State, and paid for with incomes and honours. If that is a charge to which the clergy are fairly exposed, and if there consequently does not exist a class, or tribunal, to which such questions can be brought with the prospect of an honest inquiry, then let the laity, rich and poor, look into the matter themselves, and give us the best they can upon it. As I have said, they have the most important sources of knowledge in their own hands. They may not know much of the great philosophers, or of the Christian Fathers, but they have the Word and the Testimony, and they know more of their own souls than anybody else can tell them.

Ninety-nine out of every hundred in the human race have to settle the chief questions of life without

any assistance from books, from theologians or philosophers. If they are Christians, they may have a preacher, who just preaches what he has heard or read. I must conclude it to be a Divine ordinance that men have to answer important questions for themselves, and that they have a sufficient stock of knowledge and ideas for the purpose. It may seem an inconsistency to tell people they don't require books, and then invite them to read some hundred pages. My answer is, that people are reading thousands of pages on the wrong side, and I only put in a claim to be read on what I believe to be the right side.

IV

THE ALMIGHTY AND THE WORLD AS IT IS

We must begin with God. We must, too, consider well what we are about when we venture to prove, and test, and describe His being; for if the matter be the greatest, great too is the risk and the danger of failure. In all ages the very name of God has raised a controversy, and suggested new varieties of opinion and practice. The higher our conceptions of God the more does He seem to recede from us and vanish, so to speak, into infinite distance. When we attempt to bring Him down to human capacity, then the idea is liable to degradation, to multiplication, and to common convenience. But is there, or is there not, one Almighty Creator and Preserver, such as the Jews held from the beginning, and handed down in the Scriptures of the Old Testament? There is. I will suppose my readers to be fairly conversant with those Scriptures, and ready to supply the proofs from their own memory. I am aware that some Biblical scholars think they detect phases of faith and form in Hebrew tradition, but I must adhere to my belief that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob declared

Himself Almighty, and was constantly acknowledged as such by all true Israelites.

This Being exists, and exercises all His attributes in all times and places, indeed beyond all time and place. He is at once Infinite and Infinitesimal in maintaining and governing thousands of millions of solar systems like ours at immeasurable distances from us, and equally present in the life, form, and movements of the minutest creature that the microscope has revealed to us. He reigns in every atom of the solid globe, making it obedient to the laws of gravitation, heat, electricity, and other mysterious agencies. He makes every atom attract every other atom in the universe and be attracted in return, so far as to make huge and ponderous suns and planets, many millions of miles off, speed, or lag, in their journeys through space. We may not have seen them, heard of them, or imagined them, but the very dust rising under our feet or blown into our eyes knows them, sways them, and obeys them. Every grain of sand in the pathless desert performs exactly the reciprocal duties which man with all his wit and his many centuries of schooling still fails to discharge, or even to ascertain.

The only account of this and innumerable other operations, equally immense, equally undeniable, is that God does it all. God, as the French savant felt himself almost driven to admit, is in the root of every herb, and in every flower of the field. In the deepest ocean, every drop lying in the stillest depth, or blown

into foam by the storm raging above, is doing as He bids it. Place, time, and season seem poor fictions of the human intellect in the estimate of such a Being, or of our duties to Him. We cannot point and say, He is there more than elsewhere ; we cannot assign to Him dates, eras, epochs, periods, departures, and beginnings.

The mere philosopher, stimulated by unlimited curiosity, and nursed in continual doubt, surveys the immense pageant of nature, and feels it enough to know. He is ready to see the universe and die. A life of learning, he feels, is so much gain, come what will after. If the idea of a God be forced upon him, he may condescend to some guesswork. The actual and visible facts of the case, he holds, are bound to work out their own answers to such questions. Study nature, cultivate science and art, improve institutions and customs, and in that way work out your own deliverance from error, if it be error, to truth, if truth there be, and if it is still to be won.

But the philosopher does not find himself permitted to study calmly and dispassionately a grand moving panorama. He sees, he even takes part in, a continual war between tremendous opposites. On the one hand there is the beneficial and beautiful order of nature under the reign of laws and instincts in innumerable orders of being, culminating in Man, armed with powers so far in advance of ordinary instinct as to make him nature's undisputed lord and master. Man,

even the philosopher has to admit, is necessary to the creation. Without him there would be no unity of design, no object, no light, no appreciation of the work; only a grand performance without even a spectator, and without even the performers themselves knowing what they are about. Man is a new departure, all before being only dumb show. By man come the various harvests of the land and the sea; from him flourishing communities, noble policies, cities and states, the achievements of the poet and the statesman, the patriot and the historian. In power and promise, and in part fulfilment, the earth is just such a paradise as poets have dreamt of. What may be called the natural and just order of the world, in which all are supposed to be doing their duty, is very healthy, very beautiful, very enjoyable, even with its conditions of labour and pain. A good man said not long ago that life would be very pleasant but for its pleasures. We must allow that the world is made for goodness and happiness, and, if so, that all must depend on the way in which it is used.

But here comes the terribly dark side of human affairs. Everything seems to go wrong. Disappointment is always pursuing and generally beating the promise. Let a man, or any number of men, do their best as they think, and accomplish a grand success, at any moment the work is blasted and wrecked. It rots, it splits, it leans over, it falls, whether with a sudden crash or with slow decay matters not. The

work is done. Every life is a failure. Of most men it may be said it had been better for their work and for their memories that they had died earlier. The chief materials of history are bitter controversies and bloody battles, or, as the poet has put it, 'Oppression and deceit, unsuccessful and successful wars.' So disagreeable are the incidents of history, and so little applause do most of the chief actors on that stage win for themselves, that some historians are trying to put men and things quite out of history, and make it simply a growth and development of law and constitutional principles.

I will suppose then the case of a serious, thinking, conscientious man, not a professional philosopher, but a man who, in his recoil from fanaticism and superstition, takes his stand on the simple and noble doctrine of one all-wise, all-good, almighty Creator. Can he stop there, and resolve to believe nothing else—no providence, no interference, no mediation, no judgment, no spiritual work in progress in order to our preparation for a higher state of existence? If there be such a person, then it is plain he must be strangely satisfied with the world as it is, and as it ever has been, and as it is certain to be to the end, and he must have a strange opinion of that almighty, all-wise, all-good Being who allows the world to be what it is, and to remain what it is, apparently to the end of the long and melancholy chapter.

V

THE QUESTION RAISED

FOR the benefit of those who have not read the last chapter I must repeat that I am not just now addressing myself to those who altogether reject the notion of an All-good, All-wise, Almighty Creator, or who say we can know nothing about Him, or who think it possible all this universe may have evolved itself out of a chaos of fortuitous atoms with fortuitous properties. I will address myself to those who believe in an original creation, a Divine Beginning, like a machine set going, and intended to work well for all time without further interference. That is not what we are taught in the Bible, though many people think they can hold it together with the Bible. Nay, there are those who imagine they are standing up for the Truth and Divine Inspiration of the Bible when they vehemently resent the idea of a regular Divine government and Divine interference. With a guarded and well-husbanded belief they will accept the Creation, and a Revelation, connected by a series of special and miraculous interferences; but there they take their

stand, and say to the Almighty—at least they seem to say—'Thus far shalt Thou go, and no farther.' They seem to require that they shall be left in complete and exclusive possession, and that the Great Landlord shall not be at liberty to walk into His farm whenever He pleases, to see what His tenantry are doing, and set them right if He thinks they are injuring His property. Such believers, if we may so call them, do not think it necessary or possible to suppose any mediation of any kind between the Maker of this machine and its chief occupant, its only inhabitant capable of conceiving and recognising a Creator. So they reject altogether as a foolish fancy the idea of messages to and fro between man and his Maker, and think the Jew and the Gentile equally at fault in their very long and very portentous dreams of a *Logos* or Wisdom at once human and Divine.

But one would think that this very extraordinary contrast between promise and fulfilment, between things as they ought to be and things as they are, and have always been, and always will be, would certainly excite an intense curiosity in the best sense of that word. How is this? Why is this? What is to be the end of it? What is the answer to this astounding riddle? Why is the world bound to go right, yet always going wrong? The machine is planned with consummate wisdom and almighty power. The Engineer had unlimited command of resources, and there can be no doubt He did all for

the best. Why, then, does He so conspicuously fail? Day after day the evil exceeds the good. Why?

Many answers have been given to these painful and perplexing questions, but they come under a few heads. One answer is that so tremendous and complicated a machine as nature—that is, all matter and all the laws of matter—must be expected to produce a boundless variety of results, and cannot be expected to be always mending and controlling them. Just as it is said that corporations have no bowels, so nature—that is, the material universe—is too busy to help those who cannot take care of themselves.

Some philosophers go so far as to say, 'There can be no God in the matter, for, were there any such Being, as pious fools imagine, He would see that His work is not always going wrong.' Some—indeed those I am now most concerned with—allow there is, or may be, a God; indeed, they say expressly, 'I believe in a God, but not such a God as you believe in; not a God that I can communicate with as one man with another.' Some say, 'So grand a question must be one of certainty. There is certainty in physical researches. Science makes no mistakes; at least it soon discovers them and sets them right. The telescope and the microscope, the chemical test and the scales, are far more powerful and truthful than sceptres and crosiers. They are not affected by factions and revolutions. They have not as yet revealed the presence of a God in human affairs. They only prove

that we can do without one, and, indeed, are doing.' Some philosophers are wise and prudent. If questioned they reply that their religion is the religion of a philosopher. If asked what that is, they reply that a philosopher keeps that to himself.

These and many other answers to the most important of questions proceed upon the notion that there is perfect truth in science—that is, in physical science; but only approximate or conjectural truth in moral—that is, in human—affairs. There it is all haphazard, man-made, very ill made, very ill done altogether, a corruption rather than a perfection, disorder rather than order, a mere playground for creatures worse than children because more depraved than children, as well as stronger and cleverer to work their wicked wills. Such are some of the forms of the answer we read of in the Bible: 'The fool saith in his heart, There is no God'—that is, no God to interfere with us. Only the fools of our day would seem to be more numerous, more audacious, more powerful, and more at liberty than the fools who said this in their heart.

Let us see what there is against this common consent and long tradition of fools. A much more universal consent, and a much older tradition, amounting virtually to an agreement always, everywhere, and by all, that there is a God, that He rules in human affairs, and that He can be approached by every human being. Religion—that is, worship—is the most ancient, most universal, most prominent, and most

powerful institution in the world. We cannot go far back enough to find when it was not. We cannot find a human family, in however degraded a form, without some feeble vestige of a belief. If their humanity can hardly be recognised, still they let out a consciousness of something more. If travellers tell us the born savages are simply brutes, we have to ask what the travellers are themselves.

Some folks will admit the antiquity and universality of religion, but will ask, What can all that signify to us? They will say that the differences are so enormous, the errors so vastly outweighing the truth, the truth itself so overloaded, disfigured, hidden with inventions of gods upon gods, saints upon saints, priesthoods, ceremonies, follies and crimes, that the testimony of the human race becomes no testimony at all, being merely a general clash of discordant testimonies at positive war with one another.

Whom are we to believe, and what are we to believe, say the philosophers, when everybody is saying that everybody else is wrong? Let us accept the testimony of the whole world against itself, they proceed to argue. All are wrong. Their evidence is virtually destructive. But even the hard-headed lawyers would not admit that conclusion. They would see that minor differences only add weight to the chief points in evidence, proving that what is common to all the testimonies must indeed be original and true, to be proof against so many powerful influences tending to divergence and final extinction.

VI

TESTIMONY OF HISTORIC MAN

SOME of our philosophers admit that there may be a God; indeed, that it is a matter quite out of our reckoning, and that it is folly to say either yes or no to that question. They will allow there may be any number of beings much better and wiser than ourselves, and with a larger range of powers. For the present, they say, these possible beings are no concern of ours; we can do nothing to them, nor they, apparently, to us. This is what they stand out for. We have no known or discernible relation to this Being, or these beings. If, therefore, we think anything of the sort, it is, they tell us, only a fancy—an idea—in the imagination, not in reason, and certainly not in fact, or experience, as philosophers usually express it.

But a fact there certainly is, and it is a fact to be accounted for, like any other fact. It is, too, one of the most universal, prominent, and self-asserting facts always and everywhere in this world. It is the fact of a single order of beings in this world, one out of many thousand orders of beings, continually imagining a God, and looking to Him and establishing

relations with Him. Our philosophers sometimes proclaim, with very much delight, that they have discovered in some well-known bird, beast, fish, or creeping thing, some indication of powers its progenitors possessed, and that have been lost for want of exercise or fit surroundings. The indication may be very small indeed—the form of a joint or a muscle, something not necessary under the creature's existing conditions, and having thus a purely historical or scientific value. But what indication of a lost past or possible future have they found to compare with the universal belief in a God, and such a God as we can have practical relations with?

Philosophers are bound to take man as they find him, and wholly, not in part. They profess to deal with certainties. The human race now on earth is a certainty, very ascertainable, open to all kinds of analytical treatment. The human race of all history —that is, of four or five thousand years—we know a good deal about. It has all been more or less religious—much more than less—mostly very religious. It has been full of the idea of God in one form or another; it has been full of ceremonies—its calendars have been loaded with festivals. How is it possible to silence the universal testimony of living man, and historic man, to the existence and presence of God?

All the great cities of the Old World were full of temples, open-air altars, sacred statues, priesthoods,

and daily processions. These represented very old traditions and legends. In the crowds of worshippers, followers, and spectators were many educated men, who regarded all this show with a mixture of curiosity, admiration, and respect, and who could scarcely go out of doors without having to partake in some act of worship. After actual attendance on one or two grand ceremonies, a small party of 'thinkers' would meet and ask one another what they thought about gods, what sort of beings were they, what they did, and whether there were any gods at all; and one of the company would let out, quite in confidence, that he did not believe there was a God, though he was habitually testifying to the existence of hundreds, and even asking—indeed, praying—for their kind services.

If the opinions of these free and easy philosophers might not be worth much, their testimony—the testimony of their lives and daily practices—was good for something. This universal, enormous, and multitudinous worship must have had a beginning. When you hear a peal of thunder, you know that it consists of many reverberations following one original explosion; but you cannot tell which is which, for the echoes are often louder to your ears than the single note which set the whole peal going. Such a note there must have been. Everywhere there are traditions of a golden age, when infant man was led by the hand, taught by word of mouth, exchanged human smiles with Divine, and had Divine, as well as

angelic, companionship—much needed, seeing how few and helpless man must have been.

But it is the fact of these traditions I am noting. How came it? Who first told the tale? If he was a romancer, what put the idea in his head? The fact we have to account for is beyond all doubt. It is the tradition itself. Some philosophers account for it by a certain tendency in the human mind, and in human affairs, to run into the marvellous, the superstitious, and the Divine. If so, the tendency is a fact, and has to be accounted for. But the Christian has to remember that all this, if in our mind, is in God's mind; that it cannot be in us without His permission—indeed, His doing; that it must be done with a good purpose, and that it is a communication from God to us for our good, even mixed with much that comes of the evil seed, and that has to be rejected.

What if our philosophers could make out to their satisfaction that there once were beings on earth like man, and yet apparently incapable of imagining a God? But that is not the man of all history, and it certainly is not philosophical to set aside the historical man—that is, the man of the known periods, and even ourselves, and install in his place, as the only true and proper man, a quite undeveloped and very problematical being.

Here and there they have made what they consider a very great find. It is not a fossil man with wings, or even web-footed; it is not even a giant—

nay, not even a centaur ; nay, not even a harpy, or a sphinx, or a Briareus, which would, at least, be terrible, whether lovable or not. What they believe, or hope, they have found is a grovelling, cowering wretch, hiding in the cave he found to hand, with barely sufficient glimpse of reason to crush bones with a stone, to make celts, arrow-heads, and fishhooks, to carve a bowl or a spoon out of a skull, and with sufficient vanity to string necklaces of flint-stones, and even to make a comb. Well, they fondly hope they have found a sign of art. They believe they have traced mammoths and mastodons scratched on bone. The principal charm of these promising discoveries is that these pitiable creatures cannot be supposed to have had any idea of God. They can have had no priests, no churches, no literature, no poets giving to airy nothings a local habitation and a name. Of course, it would have to be proved from these negative arguments that, if they ever existed, they had no idea of God ; for many people have an idea of God, and very deep sensations of a just and avenging God, and yet have little to show for it. What sort of a city, for example, did Cain found, and what was the manner of life established there? A religious man, after paying a week's visit to a very good house in the Midland counties, remarked upon it that there was everything there except God and Heaven. It was hardly fair to his host. A man can be religious after a fashion, and make very little show of it—too little, indeed. But

this is the special value of these interesting excavations. It consists in finding a man that had some dominion over the brutes, and no tradition, no belief, no conception of a God. Such a man would have reason in some lower degree; but, it is hoped and trusted by these philosophers, no 'Word,' no *Logos*, no natural incense of the human soul rising upwards to God, and receiving gracious answers in return.

Savage life, indeed, has a story of its own, as well as that which we call civilised. Except in the above very uncertain and undecipherable vestiges of utter barbarism, all our knowledge of aboriginal races, and of their habits, comes to us through their civilised neighbours. The civilised and the uncivilised knew, heard, and saw a good deal of one another, and it could not be by absolute necessity that the most remote savages remained what they were. A wholesome and beneficial curiosity led men of science in very early times to traverse the world in quest of information that would procure for them a high place in their own country, and, on the other hand, even in the wildest or most sluggish races there were individuals who made their way out of the forest or the morass to the higher life of cities and states. Some of the most eminent men of antiquity sprang out of the most backward or most neglected quarters. That such self-promotion rests with the individuals themselves, and that whole masses of men have a free choice between civilisation and semi-barbarism,

and may prefer the latter, is a truth the proof of which does not lie far from home. A few hours will take an earnest ethnological inquirer to districts where human beings will, of choice, make common homes and common tables with pigs, and forcibly resist any attempt to present them with a human habitation in place of a sty. But he will not find these people destitute of religious ideas and religious duties because they lack the special characteristics of civilisation. On the contrary, he will find them peopling earth, air, and sky more thickly and vividly than those who, after lives of research, have not yet lit on a belief they can close with. If these poor benighted savages at our doors have much to learn, they have also something to teach, and they certainly show by their own example that voluntary barbarism —be it historic or pre-historic—does not exclude the sense of Divine relations or a strong hold upon ancient tradition.

VII

WORK OF GOD IN THE MIND OF MAN

My readers must bear with me if I seem to return and return again to a topic. I feel contending against difficulties that continually recur—indeed, are never removed. The chief of these difficulties is the obstinate distinction which many will make between the work of God in nature and His work in the heart and soul of man. The cleverer the people are, the more do they cling to this supposed distinction and attempt to enforce it. They find themselves possessed, as they think, of an unlimited power over their own minds. They can learn the contents of libraries. They can repeat poems and analyse philosophies. They can write histories and draw maps from memory. What is more, they can invent and create out of nothing. The very word 'poet' means 'creator,' and is the noun of the verb used in the first verse of the Greek Bible. The comparative few who have a large share of the requisite faculties can bring into existence new worlds of thought, like Shakespeare and some of our modern novelists, and they thereby exercise an immense influence, only short of an absolute command, over their

fellow-creatures. Statesmen and great soldiers have as great power, not so much over human thought, but still more over human action. They can bend the minds of millions to their purpose. At one time Napoleon Buonaparte had all the continent of Europe tied to his chariot-wheels. Such persons cannot help feeling that all this is their own work. If it does occur to them sometimes that God has a hand in it, they resist the idea as if it weakened, distracted, and embarrassed them. They who are much employed in adapting large means to definite ends soon cease to care for the distant and the doubtful.

This self-confidence is shown quite as much by the men of the pen as by the men of the sword, or of the tongue. Though the writers have more leisure to think about it than the orators or the men of action, they are even more audacious and more irreverent in putting God quite out of the question. In these days they have come very generally to the conclusion that nobody can say how the world was made, or how it goes on; but that anybody can be quite certain that man has made all his own thoughts, ideas, notions, beliefs, or whatever there is to be found in his head, heart, or soul. The thinkers of our time defy God, or challenge Him to show Himself and do something if He can, just as Milton makes Satan provoke God to do His worst. The arch-fiend fancied hell his own, and even preferred independence there to service in heaven. That is the

attitude of 'Thought' in our own times. But God is as omnipresent and predominant in thought as in matter and its laws.

So I will endeavour to speak plainly and to engage the serious attention of my readers. In all this dispute and confusion and clamour, in all our quarrels and controversies, in all our mistakes, and I must say our misdeeds, God is as present and active and powerful as in the elemental order and elemental strife of nature. Whoever undertakes to account for the universe cannot leave anything out of count. He must not say that he can account for the world but not for man, finding him unaccountable. He must not go as far as tools and instruments will take him, and then say positively he is certain there is nothing more. He cannot call man a monster out of place in this world, or vermin, a mere disease or imposthume, as old writers called it, or an alien intruder. He must account for man, and, what is more, for his sayings, his doings, his notions, his beliefs, and, above all, for his very unique way of looking upwards and endeavouring to hail another Being or beings may be, far above, far away, all around, yet in himself. Nothing should be exempt from the scrutiny, the penetration, and the wisdom of a philosopher. He cannot pretend to say that man is a being of no importance, or of only secondary importance, and that his prodigious acts and startling opinions are no better than so many burrows, birds'-nests, spiders' webs, kittens' play, and cry of wild fowl.

Man, indeed, is in the predicament that he must rank higher or lower than birds, beasts, and fishes, for he has never yet attained his proper form of habit, action, and utterance, and is more conspicuous in the general survey of animated creation by his failures than by his successes. A philosopher indeed might say, 'I'll wait till this strange creature has found his proper form, and then I'll give him his place in creation, as you call it.' But the philosopher is not so hopeful. It is not merely man he shrinks from dealing with, but something behind man, a shadow, a sound, a glimpse, a darkness, that man calls God. So having to describe the nondescript that he finds on earth, he describes him as much like a beast as can be—earth-made, one of a breed, moulded into his present shape and ways by descent, by imitation, by external influence and pressure of circumstances. Man, it must be confessed, uses many creatures very ill, and disfigures them very ignominiously for his own selfish needs, but none does he use so ill or change so wantonly as the philosopher does man himself before he admits him into his museum.

But I must not dwell on the indignities man is subject to at the hands of these worse than homicides. The fact, the twofold fact, to which I am calling the attention of my friends, is that in this vast creation of unchangeable laws, working from age to age with absolute exactness, and bound to produce a certain perfection, and to stop there, no creature rising, or

promising to rise, or wishing to rise above the level of all time, here is man, with powers and hopes immeasurably higher, though in effect as often as not falling lower. He has in himself a whole world of knowledge, of history, of politics, of philosophy, of poetry, and of fiction. Even if this were all it would be a rich inheritance, a generous inspiration, a splendid investiture. But so far from being all, it is as nothing compared with the second part of man's twofold nature. He carries in his head and heart the conception of another Being infinitely greater and better.

Religion, in one form or other, occupies the largest place among the subjects of human thought and action. It is the one common interest of all ages and climes. The heavens continually recede from us, but man pursues the theme all the more persistently. The gulf widens; the goal is more than ever unattainable; the surer we may be of an infinite Maker and Preserver, the more we feel that we shall never grasp Him, or see Him, or hear Him, as we see the things of sense about us. But that gulf is not the blackness of darkness. It is not an abyss. It is not perilously spanned by the dizzy path of a fairy tale or an ingenious impostor. It is full of light, life, method, and inexhaustible energy. All the tribes of humanity, all the schools of learning, all kingdoms and empires, all art, and even all science, have contributed to fill and illuminate this void, and to assure us that there is a way from man to God, and from God to man.

If the desire of all nations means anything more than a morbid craving felt from time to time, there is no wall of separation here, and heaven and earth are not two, but one. We can assign no locality to this common ground, this earthly, heavenly realm. It is in us, in every heart of man that has not been utterly debased, brutalised, stupefied and destroyed, if corruption indeed has gone so far. The heart of man is the temple of God, as He reveals Himself to man. We cannot think, or feel, or imagine without Him. He imparts the power, and He inspires the goodness ; He turns our thoughts upwards, and guides them to their present Lord and future home.

Our ideas of God may be ever so wanting, ever so grotesque, ever so biassed by our own wild wills or gross prepossessions. The power even to be wrong comes from Him, and the power to be right is His gracious gift. As we cannot really get out of ourselves, and are bound by the laws of our own nature, we cannot but conceive of God as a perfect man—the source of all moral perfection, as seen through our own contracted vision.

For centuries the ancient world fixed its anxious gaze on this world of thought and feeling, and desired the presence and the agency of a living and life-giving Power, who was in truth God and man.

Speculation might run wild, fancy might have her vagaries, audacity might attempt new and complicated systems in the hope that they would prove veritable

discoveries and redound to the glory of the discoverers. But the main idea held its ground and threw off the fictions laid upon it.

When our Lord came on earth, the worship of gods many and lords many had everywhere dwindled into so many picturesque traditions, rites, and ceremonies, and out of ten thousand decaying temples and altars the one idea which we translate 'the Word,' but which is really not to be translated into our language, even if it can be justly rendered in any language, possessed the most thoughtful minds of Jews, Greeks, Romans, and even barbarians, as the outer world were called. This was God as man can apprehend Him, love Him, and converse with Him.

VIII

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

I MUST be true to my promise. I am speaking to the unlearned—that is, to those who have not received a classical education, and who have only a sort of hearsay acquaintance with the various religions and philosophies of the heathen world. These were all supposed to fill up the immeasurable void between man and God, between earth and heaven, if there should be such a thing. They all professed to reveal, or to make a communication from man to God, and from God to man, and for this purpose they imagined beings and forms of being more or less human, more or less divine. By the time the Church of Christ was thoroughly founded all these imaginations and systems had been well-nigh gathered into one idea, the *Logos*, God and Man, occupying the human mind, giving it warmth and light and life. Whether they wholly disappeared in it is still a controversy.

Let not my young readers quarrel with the name, but rather give their attention to that which it signifies. Here was the whole civilised world, Jewish and pagan, bond and free, possessed with a belief in a living

and life-giving communication between the Infinite and poor earth-bound man. This belief, this idea, this supposed communication, was not merely the work of God, it was the very presence of God, it was God—that is, God in man, condescending to man's intelligence, and for that purpose accommodating Himself to man's narrow compass and narrow range of ideas.

We must not think lightly of the prevailing and all but universal philosophy of the civilised world when our Lord came to visit His people. At that time God had done many wonderful things that nobody could have foreseen or thought possible a hundred years before. He had united all the world under one government, the best the world had seen. He had established within that government a code of laws, which lies at the foundation of all law to this day. This political system brought about and maintained for half a century what we find so difficult to maintain, a profound and universal *peace*. Even the almanack had been recently settled much as it is now.

But this golden age of peace and happiness, as it seemed to be, failed to satisfy a still hoping, still inquiring world. The religious philosophy of a rational medium between God and man, even though it claimed to be light and life, and was light and life as far as it went, seemed only an idea, a dream, a system, a school of thought. While the greater part of the world was agreed that there certainly was such a thing, they

differed as to its character and nature, and place in nature and in human affairs. The idea wanted life and warmth. It wanted what we call personality. People were not afraid of it ; nobody could be said to love it. Admired it might be, but as the work of man's hands. They who discoursed well upon it got themselves the admiration. Indeed for a long time the way, almost the only way, to fame and consideration and a good position was to declaim well on the *Logos*. That, as you may readily suppose, was but a cold affair. The ancient Druids were said to be able to bring the moon down into the sacred groves. Were you to read some ancient authors on the *Logos* you would conclude it to be an operation of the same chill and fanciful kind. Yet it must always be remembered that this *Logos* stood for God in the heart and mind of man, guiding him to goodness and truth, and revealing to him the secrets of nature and of Omnipotence.

The idea wanted what we call realising ; it was a dream to be interpreted, and a prophecy to be fulfilled. It was a throne still vacant. All nature was groaning and travailing, but the birth was to come. The world trafficked and speculated upon the expectation. A hundred years before Christ any Roman functionary claiming to be divine would soon have had to pay a heavy penalty for his presumption. Indeed, the old Romans were quite superstitious in their jealousy of pretensions above the common scale. They noted

that a great general never prospered after he had consented to be called the 'fortunate,' as if he believed he could control the fates. But shortly before the birth of Christ this jealousy had given way to the prevailing idea of One to whom all mankind would ascribe the kingdom, the power, and the glory. Augustus Cæsar, who claimed to be descended from the gods, and to be one of their order, was regarded as a present deity. So were all the Cæsars after him, and had all their altars and their rites. It was not merely that the world had become ready for its Lord, but the very thought of such a Lord had grown and ripened into fulness and form. *Logos* was in a sense lord of the earth before the true *Logos* was revealed.

Some of this may sound new and strange to my unlearned friends. They may think it fanciful; they may think it has to do with theories, not truths; they may think it unscriptural, and very different from anything they find in the Bible; they may ask what it has to do with saving faith—that is, with salvation. They may think that anyhow it is better to leave old philosophies alone and forget them altogether. But I am dealing with veritable facts, with saving truths, with God's own revelation of Himself, with a matter of life and death, and with the very substance of that Word of which the Bible is the written record and explanation. Surely a belief held by the best and wisest men in the world for four centuries before Christ, and so long after, and which to the whole

heathen world was the basis and preparation for Gospel teaching, cannot be put aside, and ought not to be forgotten. I believe the subject to be important, in these days especially, when so many tell us the Gospel is contrary to reason. Instead of that being the case, the oldest and most universal reason, the most cultivated reason, the highest, best, and holiest reason, was looking for such a revelation as the true fulfilment of what it had only dreamt of.

My readers may not know much of the wonderful men who taught and wrote and left their works behind them for centuries before Christ. But they can hardly doubt that the Christians who maintained and spread and fully established the Church of Christ through many bloody and fiery persecutions for four hundred years after Christ were, speaking generally, good men and true, and wise unto their salvation. We certainly never should have had our faith in its present form but for these conceptions of heathen and Christian philosophers, filling the world and training the human mind.

How often do we hear in these days of what 'Thought' has done. It is proudly taken for granted that as soon as a man begins to think he must cease to believe. 'Thought' is said to have dispelled this or that notion, prejudice, or idle tale. 'Thought,' we are told, has revolutionised the world. If there had been such a thing as 'Thought' nineteen hundred years ago, it is boldly declared we should never

have had such a story as that of Christ, or such a book as the New Testament.

They who say this must have forgotten that 'Thought' led the way and prepared the world for Christ. The longest, largest, deepest, most earnest, and most concentrated effort of the human mind that history records resulted in the idea expressed by the word *Logos*—that is, reason in its highest form, embracing all that can be known of God and man. It conducted to the very threshold of a truth which it was felt had still to appear.

Of course there were those, both before and after Christ came, who were satisfied with what 'Thought' had done, and had no wish to go further. But all that those self-satisfied men thought and did is marked with imperfection, self-condemnation, and decay. Ever since Christ came the greatest thinkers of the world have been on His side. True, there have been thinkers, and there are thinkers still, who have piled up considerable systems and obtained large followings, and even niches in history, and who have put Christ and God out of court, as having no proper place in sound philosophy. But there is one thing common to all these so-called philosophers. They all expressly, indeed clamorously, insist on their scholars agreeing at once, without the least further demur, to certain premises, or supposed axioms, which human nature and facts revolt from. These philosophers feel the weakness of their own foundation, and every

now and then they entreat all the world to shout and proclaim that everything is just as they say it is, and thus establish it for ever, so that henceforth there shall be no controversy on the point.

Thus the very persons who are for changing everything they find are the most set on creating new laws after the fashion of the Medes and Persians, that alter not; and the very persons who tell us there are no laws but those that are eternal and immutable, make new laws which, at best, could only be the invention of time and circumstance, and which, in truth, can possess no authority beyond the fleeting reputation of a man.

IX

PLATO

In any discussion on this word *Logos* it is a duty, indeed, necessity, to say something of the very remarkable man who seems to have given it its place in the philosophy and faith of the world. This was Plato, who commanded the respect of Athens at a time when it was so critical and fastidious as hardly to believe anything, and the admiration of the civilised world when it was most divided, and before it had come to coalesce into empires.

Plato combined two qualities and habits, seemingly inconsistent, but well fitted for the work he had to do. He apprehended with intense energy and strength certain leading ideas, and he so abounded in illustration and invention as to go beyond many of his disciples, and even now to baffle his most loyal and admiring readers. There are people who would call him childish and frivolous; but they cannot help feeling the strong arm that grasped the human mind for many centuries, and that did not cease to grasp it even when God had come to visit His people.

It may seem strange that I should call a man a

giant and a child in the same breath, but I know not how better to express my meaning. I could make long extracts from even the most popular, and, indeed, the most valuable, of Plato's works, which you would set down as the ravings of a lunatic, and only wonder that such nonsense should ever have found a reader. But it must be admitted that some credit is due to the unanimous judgment of the human race, and I believe that Plato is the only ancient writer of whom it can be believed that every scrap he wrote, and, indeed, almost every word that he spoke, has been carefully preserved and handed down to all countries and to all time.

The first article of Plato's belief was the same as ours. It was, God Almighty, the Maker of Heaven and Earth. This, mind, was at a time when Polytheism—that is, gods many and lords many—so possessed even the civilised world that Plato's own friend and teacher had been put to death on the mere suspicion of holding a simpler and purer faith.

But Plato was more a man of the world than Socrates, who stuck to his own dear Athens, picking quarrels with the Sophists, and proving everybody except himself to be in the wrong. Then Plato made himself not only interesting but positively valuable to the Athenians, for he visited all the universities in the world, he gathered traditions from the disciples of Pythagoras, and exchanged confidences with the Egyptian priests at the temple of their own

Athene. We all of us know what it is to have a neighbour who can tell us something about the world, instead of having to pump up novelties out of his own dusty brains. Plato was very acquisitive, liberal, and accommodating, and he was ready to accept anything that fitted into his own system. He made peace with the whole party of Greek divinities by taking them into his service and placing them under the orders of his own One Supreme, Eternal, Self-existing God. To them, indeed, he delegated much of the work of the creation. But he had to contend with other antagonists besides idolaters, and their false priests, false prophets, and false teachers. He had to contend with those who held and taught not only the eternity of matter, which Plato himself held in a manner, but also the spontaneous development of all growing and living things from purely physical causes. That is now called Evolution, and is no new doctrine.

Plato accounted for the boundless variety yet uniformity and changelessness of nature by the doctrine of 'ideas' in the mind of the Almighty—that is, types and forms, already existing in the Almighty mind, into which all subordinate vitalities ran, as into their appointed moulds. I don't think Christians can quarrel with that doctrine, as the general rule of creative formation. There may be particular objections to be considered on their own merits, but there really is nothing so well established

as the long and exact endurance of that creation in which we live. Man, beasts, birds, fishes, trees, and all creeping things have been much the same in all history, and when we try to get further back than history we find ourselves on very uncertain ground. As a practical matter concerning ourselves, nature remains the same, excepting that the creatures most valuable and interesting to us, on account of their being most subservient to our needs, are capable of great improvement and great deterioration at our hands—that is, we possess and we exercise over them much the same power that we have over ourselves, and over the human species generally. We can all become better or worse, and do something to make our fellow-creatures better or worse.

Among those ideas already existing in the Divine mind was the idea of Man. Few Christians can reject the doctrine that God designed man before He made him, and that He saw what He was about to make.

But then followed the great master idea, which St. John took, I may say, for the text of his Gospel and other writings, and which lies at the foundation of our theology. It is the idea of a living and life-giving communication between God and man, partaking of the Divine and human nature, and not only constituting a channel of supplication and grace, but being a true representation and real presence of the Almighty.

If this seems a complicated and difficult matter, I will ask, in the first place, how anyone could expect it to be simple and easy. For many centuries at that time all the world had been trying to conceive of God in some intelligible form, suited to man's needs and aspirations. It had gone miserably astray in the conception of all sorts of beings, none of whom could be justly called gods at all, having very limited powers, and being generally worse than man, instead of better. There was hardly a god in the whole Pantheon of antiquity to whom a man could naturally pray to be made holier and better. At the best, these beings were the dispensers of material gifts, such as harvests, victories, fair winds, health, and success in love adventures. On the other hand, the philosophers who speculated on the Deity, or the Godhead, generally lost themselves, and, after much thought and talk, found themselves no nearer their journey's end than when they began. Once in the lines of a strict necessity, or in the lists of an eternal conflict between good and evil, or in the toils and meshes of self-existent matter, they found all their labour as much in vain as that of the poor creatures said to be condemned to fill leaky tubs, or roll big stones up hills, to find them all rolling down again.

Plato asked how it was that all mankind had missed their way, and failed to find that which they much wanted, and which they felt sure must be, but in what form they knew not. He had, as it were, to

survey and chart and map the whole field of inquiry, taking in everything to be included, and paying special attention to the great landmarks. These were the Almighty, His character; man, his nature and wants, his capabilities, his hindrances, his hopes, and the relations there must be between man and his Maker. He had also to account for matter and evil. How came matter to be at all, and how could it be made out of nothing?—for it was a fixed principle in those days that nothing can be made out of nothing. Then, how came evil in the world?—for, surely, the Almighty does not love evil; but, if so, why did He allow it? Plato evidently regarded these as abstract questions, hardly deserving a serious treatment. Matter he admitted to be eternal—that is, he saw no beginning of it, and he supposed a good deal of evil was mixed with its elements from all eternity, just as a load of natural soil will be sure to contain the seeds of pernicious weeds. You know that even serious people, when they are crossed and perplexed, will sometimes give fantastic, and even trifling, answers, thinking one answer as good as another when the question cannot be answered, and need not be answered.

Nobody, at least nobody with a head, heart, and soul, can deny that here was a legitimate matter of inquiry, even if man has not what may be called a burning love of human souls. Plato had to apply many tests and various treatments—Socrates had

taught him the use of the intellectual crucible—and he had to crush and sift the rough ore. He had to deal wisely with much that was evidently corrupt, false, and wicked in the old religions and simple invention in the new philosophies. A numerous race called Sophists filled the air and encumbered the ground, insomuch that Plato retired a little out of Athens, into a quiet suburb, to escape the din of idle words and captious objections, and to make his disciples walk a mile or so to prove their earnestness. This was some years after Malachi, the last of the Prophets, had delivered his message to the Jewish people warning them to prepare for the coming of the Lord. The Platonic philosophy, and the schools of thought arising out of it, served to occupy the human mind, not unprofitably, the whole of the four centuries between the Old Testament and the New, and, in a Christian form, for four centuries more.

X

PLATO—HIS STYLE AND TEACHING

As Plato had no revelation to make, was not a man of science, and wished to be on good terms with all the theologies and mythologies that he was acquainted with, he had to do his work in a manner of his own. He was a most agreeable and amusing talker, and he seems to have had quite a gift for fanciful tales and theories that no one has ever been able to understand. Such a gift would have been useless had not Plato also possessed a singular power of winning attention and belief, that is, belief of a certain kind. If his love was Platonic, so perhaps was the faith he inspired. That faith would be his own, for a man's own belief is generally all that he can communicate to other people. He saw things in a glass, darkly in one sense, brilliantly in another. The ancients, however, who had much discrimination, were able to recognise different kinds of persuasion, all the work of a special Power, equally potent to convince, to deceive, to befool, to stir up, to confound, indeed to produce the numerous distinct effects expressed by our rather copious glossary of deceptions. I shall be reminded that I am not

saying much for my very great man. Well, it is to be considered that he was a philosopher, that he lived much among the philosophers, had the *entrée* of many philosophic clubs and circles. Special gifts, ay, gifts with a providential design, exist in a great variety of combinations. I trust it is not improper to say that the Almighty does His work by fair means or by foul. The work is to be done, but it does not follow that the doer is to be good, for that would make his goodness a matter of ordinance, indeed a creation. The man charged with a high mission, born to it, armed for it, and assisted to it, is still a man, on his trial like other men. We all believe that the man 'after God's own heart' had a mission, and received gifts accordingly, but he was nevertheless to stand trials. Most Englishmen think the like of our Henry VIII. Humanly speaking, it seems quite impossible for men to have very high qualities, including almost absolute power, without failing sadly, and that in several respects. However, Plato is not held to require apology, except as regards the charge of talking nonsense, or what reads very like nonsense. Perhaps nobody has so largely or so sweetly influenced the English mind as that 'inspired idiot,' Oliver Goldsmith. But I must stay my hand in this direction or I shall never return to my subject. Only one point more : every deduction from the physical or intellectual estimation of a man who has done good work is so much placed to his providential character.

Though Plato's writings and table-talk have been preserved with almost superfluous care, it is possible he may often have been incorrectly reported, when too he had himself been misreporting others. But one great aim is seen through all his utterances. By every means in his power he would draw the attention of his pupils from the lower interests to the higher, and from time to eternity. I suppose too that even in these days something is to be said for a Christian parent allowing his children to spend all their idle time in reading fairy tales, novels, and volumes candidly confessing to be nonsense and nothing more. That much at least may be said for Plato.

Others may describe his aim more fully and more accurately, but it seems to me his main object was to inculcate the distinction between the self-existing and that which is created; between the constant and that which comes and goes; between the always living and the always dying; between the absolutely good and that which is mixed and doubtful; between that which can only give and that which can have nothing but what it receives; between pure reason and that which is associated with perishable matter; between incorruption and corruption. The philosophy of those days was bred in the lap of Paganism, and it could not escape the leading idea of Paganism, an endless downward succession of partly spiritual, partly corporeal agencies. Plato went some way in this direction. But as far as I can make out he only allowed to the inferior

divinities a long lease of life, for the earthly and mutable part of their nature would gradually lose itself in the conflict of material elements, when the immutable part would return to the essence of the one God over all.

To Christians who can do little more than consult a popular commentary, Plato is chiefly known as the preacher of the *Logos*—that is, as we translate it, the Word. True, it was only part of a philosophy—the doctrine of eternal and living ideas, forming the types and patterns of actual existences. But while there is much more to be said for eternal ideas than some people suppose—and indeed no Christian can doubt the eternal designs and foreknowledge of God—the world has not put these 'ideas' on the same footing as the *Logos*, for that has been adopted into the Christian faith, and has its own Evangelist, its own Epistles, and its own special Revelation. You know there are those who would strike these books out of the Bible altogether, as being later additions, without authority, and contrary to the tenor or general tone of the New Testament. It is very true that the other Gospels and Epistles were immediately addressed to Jewish Christians who, with some local exceptions, were much indisposed to what we call Platonism, and all Greek philosophy, having their own schools, their own traditions, and a Wisdom of their own. But as the Almighty has allowed these books to pass current in His Church for at least

seventeen hundred years, and to contribute to the formation and expression of the Christian faith, it remains only for us to make the best use of them and understand them as well as we can. Indeed the clergy might with advantage dwell more than they do on the opening verses of St. John's Gospel, and preach more upon them.

I have said that Plato noted his landmarks and kept them well in view, the first being the Almighty and His attributes or character. We cannot venture to name any time or place when, or where, there were not intelligent beings owing their existence to God, bound to love and obey Him, receiving communications from Him, and able to convey to Him their thanks and their prayers and other outpourings. All intelligent beings would be in the Almighty and the Almighty in all.

But that you may understand this the better, I must ask you to look into yourselves, and to bear in mind how God presents Himself to you, and how you present yourselves to yourselves, when you think of God in a serious manner, and enter into communion with Him. This cannot be done without a combined effort of feeling, reason, and imagination. These may be a threefold source of error, but it is a threefold necessity of the case. We cannot imagine the Almighty; we are warned not to attempt it, and our philosophers agree with Holy Writ in pronouncing it impossible. But we certainly imagine something,

indeed very much and always according to our own nature, habits, traditions, needs, and occasions. These imaginations are many and definite in our own direction, that is, downwards, in the purely human or earthly part; but unavoidably indefinite upwards, towards the Almighty. In that direction our boldest and loftiest conceptions disappear. We cannot penetrate the cloud. Our thoughts are bound within our own narrow dimensions and limited powers. We imagine some form of humanity, everybody his own variety. It is certain that no one human being is exactly and in all respects like any other, and it cannot but be that the form, or idea, interposed between man and the Infinite must differ in every case. But in one thing all agree. It is the universal character of sonship given to these mediatorial ideas. Even in the most multitudinous, outrageous, and grotesque polytheism all are sons of God. I know that it will be stoutly denied by many persons that they themselves interpose any imagination between themselves and the Almighty, and perhaps it will be added that the Jews did not, being indeed forbidden; but such assertions have to be carefully scrutinised, and it will then be found that even those who most indignantly repudiate all mediatorial ideas still hold a certain form of goodness, or ideal of a good man, in which they robe themselves as with a ceremonial vestment when they address themselves to the Almighty. But I repeat I must not attempt to follow the variations

of sonship. It is enough to say that we cannot even attempt to rise out of ourselves, or bridge over the void between us and the Almighty, without accepting the idea of a Son of God, at once human and Divine, conveying our prayers and heart-offerings to the Almighty, and His precious gifts to ourselves. Now this is no other than the *Logos* of the old philosophers, the perfection of reason, and the continual message from the Infinite.

XI

THE FATHER OF SPIRITS

To many minds this ancient theory of a Divine mediation will seem fanciful, unreal, incapable of proof, and a very spurious sort of philosophy. First and foremost among the objectors will be those who are exclusively addicted to the physical and exact sciences, and who will accept nothing that cannot be brought within the reach of our senses by the laboratory, the telescope, the microscope, and other still more wonderful appliances for the investigation of natural matter and force. 'There is truth here,' they say, 'but what truth can there be found in fancies and feelings confessed indeed to be infinitely various and inscrutable? There is no solid ground here to work upon,' they tell us; 'it is all imagination and not reality. Instead of setting up all this airy stuff above science, let us rather reduce it, if we can, to the rules of science, find out its invariable laws, and leave the rubbish alone. What has practical life to do with dreams?' This is at least the tone of our material philosophers, even if they have not all the courage of their opinions. What do such objections come to? Let us see.

No such question as this can be answered or entered upon except in the conscious presence of that Almighty, from Whom, and of Whom, and to Whom are all things. He is carrying on great works—one work, to our apprehension, greater than all His other works of which we have any knowledge. Let us take first that ordinary work which we commonly conceive to be described in the first five days of the Creation. It is the creation and maintenance of what people call the creatures—that is, all other than man. We do not commonly suppose the highest of them to have any knowledge of God. They may be creatures of necessity, evolution, instinct, and what not. We do not believe them to be moral agents. We do not regard the Almighty as the Father of horses and kine.

But by the testimony and feeling of the human race the Almighty is the Father of men. They have spirits, and He is the Father of spirits. They and their Father have a large amount of common intelligence—large in their scale, small indeed in His. They are in Him and He in them. But they are distinct, and have free wills. Man can and does converse with God as he does with fellow-man, and the conversations of God and man form the sublimest, the most ennobling, and the most beneficial part of our mental conceptions. This converse of the Father with other spirits is the Word, the *Logos* of the Greek philosophers, the Wisdom of the pious Jews, beckoning them to a closer acquaintance.

Return again to the above contrast between these two works and these two orders of existence, unless you have quite made up your minds to live and die with the lower order. God is making and conducting a great material creation, including countless varieties of living organisation, from the simplest to the most complicated forms. Science is revealing to us every day more and more astonishing facts of this physical creation. It is telling us of creation upon creation, succeeding one another or growing out of one another, as may be. By its own admission, however—indeed to its own honour and glory—it is collecting all these wonderful facts from the ever-heaving grave, and ever-descending catacombs, and ever-raging battlefield of the illimitable past. Death there reigns triumphant, as science declares and Christians are not able to gainsay. This earth, indeed the ocean too, is but a great charnel-house. Life—mere vital existence—is ephemeral or annual, with some few exceptions just to link the centuries. All these creatures—from the elephant and the eagle to the minute activities, many millions of which contribute to the smallest lump of chalk—have passed away, leaving no record. They are nothing, and presumably never were anything. A plant does just as it is done by, and it is quite impossible to prove that a horse or a dog does otherwise. Of the great laws of matter and force and the secrets of nature it is impossible to conceive their having any consciousness, or free-will, or story, or

necessary place in any great drama of moral life. Is nature conscious? Does it know what it is doing? Can it render account? Can it do more than live, and die, and repeat year by year its glorious but short-lived show? True, even here, and in this sad and solemn triumph of eternal death, there are the pictures and emblems of fatherhood and sonship, and if men could school their passions by the teaching or the warnings of these mute monitors, they might thereby advance a step nearer to their common Creator. But in truth if nature be a man's only companion, he is alone, and more apt to sink below the level of his surroundings than to rise above them.

On the other hand, what do we see in man? We see a being incomparably nobler and more powerful than all other creatures, if indeed he be only a creature, and not a divinity that has inhabited this world for a very short time, and in a still shorter time has burst into a glorious life with all the suddenness of a long dormant volcano. A hundred times the life of a man does not seem much to those accustomed to count by millions, but well within a hundred times the life of the writer this earth has been planted and peopled with a vast brotherhood, enjoying much community of ideas and feelings and traditions, and even taking several parts in one great design.

Our philosophers are daily discovering much that is common in all the religions of the world. They find what they can regard as a substantial unity.

Certainly there is much unity and much indication of a common source in our moral and intellectual notions—that is, in the creations of our hearts and our brains. It is a mighty work we are all engaged on; we are making wonderful progress in art and science, in command of nature, in exacter and higher notions of right and wrong, and even in our conceptions of God and His will. There is promise of much more. Perhaps we shall cease to slaughter one another on the plea of justice or necessity. Perhaps we shall cease to misuse God's good gifts, as we continually do now. Perhaps there will be less inequality of condition, less want, less excess, less misery, dirt, and shame, less absolute ignorance, and even less folly. My own memory is a long one, and it took count of things early. I can answer for it the world—that is, humanity—has made great progress and improved much in the course of eighty years. I am very much of the world, and, speaking for myself, I find myself more comprehensive in my affections, and at the same time more heavenward and more Godward in my aspirations and feelings than I was in my early days. Now all this great spiritual work, or creation as we may call it, is quite as much the immediate work of God doing it on the very spot as anything we are wont to call nature. It is as much His handiwork as what we distinctly call His creatures.

But besides what we can see with our eyes and lay our hands upon, there is spirit in all this, for it is

the combined and concordant operation of many millions of spirits, influenced, enlightened, warmed, and guided by one supreme Spirit, the Father of spirits. Think you that it is scientific and philosophical to leave all this to the laws of chance or the wilder risks of caprice, and to confine oneself to chemical combinations and animal structures, to bacilli, microbes, atoms, and protoplasms? Within a very short time the world has become full and overflowing—overburdened some think—with the products of mind, in the many forms of literature—history, poetry, philosophy, the drama, fiction, essays, travels, criticism, philology, and new subjects, new topics every day, all only too inviting, too exhaustive, for man's feeble powers and narrow range of time and opportunity.

In all this there is a Divine unity. All this has God done, and His are the actual governance, power, and glory. Man has done it only as a servant, an agent, a steward of God's gifts. It certainly is God's work as much as the amazing laws by which a flying atom of dust maintains undoubted though immeasurable relations with the whole universe. God is speaking to us in all this, even in the vast chorus of innumerable human voices and pens. So far as this chorus is true to the Divine original it is the Word—the *Logos*. It is God speaking to us and we to God. We cannot impose limitations of time and space to the communications between God and intelligent beings. Our exact or mathematical knowledge is

confined to the visible creation. This much, however, we see. All creation is in conformity with the true nature of man as inspired, taught, and guided by the Almighty Father, and thereby adopted as son. We know of no thing—no form of life or matter—over which man does not possess and enjoy an evidently deputed and rightful dominion.

The Word, even as the heathen philosopher conceived it, is the very presence of God in the soul of man ; it is the relation of God to man, and of man to God ; it is that which passes to and fro ; it is God as He declares Himself to us, and man as he disposes himself towards God, under Divine guidance and in submission to the Divine will. It will be said that such it might be in the mind of a religious philosopher, but what place has the Word in the minds of bad men, framing their religion to suit their own vicious lives, and worshipping, in fact, the creatures of their own depraved fancy ? What place can the Word have in the minds of those who reject religion altogether, and believe in nothing but a cruel necessity or blind chance, or the irresistible course of headstrong passion ? But God, we have to own, is everywhere. There is no place so dark, no company so debased, no work so wicked, but that God is there. To the hardest heart, the dullest ear, the blindest eye, and the most stubborn will, He is present in all His power and goodness, working in mysterious ways, often with an effect beyond human

anticipation. He only can enter into the heart of man and record the result. Bad men, it is a very old remark, and the result of long experience, are often not so bad as they seem, and it is sad to say also, good men are not always as good as they seem to be. As for the strange polytheism and still stranger philosophical systems that possess some great races, specially in the East, if they are to be judged by their fruits they certainly do not quite stand that test ; but, on the other hand, neither do they fail altogether. At least these races show much goodness, if not in consequence, yet in spite of the national religions. We cannot say God is not present and speaking to them continually. So we cannot say His Word is not there in their hearts and understandings. They are not themselves stocks and stones, or as the brute beasts that perish and are forgotten.

XII

THE WORD AND POLYTHEISM

I SHALL have to remind myself, now and then, whom I suppose myself to be conversing with. There must remain old people at three or four villages who can testify to the pleasure I always had in this part of my pastoral service. I take for granted that you are able and willing to understand the Bible and the Creeds, as far as they can be understood. You must often have been told by rude, and perhaps also bad, people, that this or that doctrine of the Church is all fancy, or notion and invention, and in very coarse language, may be. At most public-houses in England you might meet with men who would at once say this of the Word. By the Word of God they would understand the Bible, and they will not speak of that book as you would wish. But as for the Word in a more comprehensive sense, they would think themselves at liberty to scoff at the notion. Your clergyman has been preaching on the opening verses of St. John's Gospel, or on the corresponding passages in his First Epistle, and in the Revelation. He has described the Word as the Divine Word, the Word of God,

The Word, the One Light and Heat from the Almighty. Some of the congregation will tell you it's all a matter of words—that is, idle talk, and no more. What is it? What does it come to? If it be anything real, they will tell you, it ought to be unmistakably clear and true, showing at once what is the Word, and what is not the Word. Such, however, is not the case in common matters, or in Divine matters, as they come within reach of our understanding. Everywhere and always there is mixture of good and ill, tares in the wheat, shortcomings, blights, maims, malformation, deterioration, disguises, and disfigurements. Our faith compels us to accept unreservedly that the Almighty is everywhere, in every person, in every thing, Himself doing everything, even when He submits to be the slave of slaves, the humble servant of those who are in truth serving themselves, or some evil master. Yet through this cloud of dust and din we have to see and hear God. If we do see and hear Him, it is the Word reaching our hearts and minds.

It will be asked how we can distinguish this from the other work of the Almighty Father, and what need is there of our making the attempt to distinguish it. Certainly it was not the Church of Christ that first made the attempt to distinguish between the Word of God and the Work of God. The Word of God, as a continual communication from God to the heart and mind of man, is the leading truth in the Old Testament and the most remarkable fact in

Jewish history. In a very different way, but with equal force, Gentile polytheism, with all its folly, was a corrupted and distorted testimony to the Word. The earlier Greek philosophers, say six or seven centuries before Christ, were in great request for the foundation of cities and schools—universities we should perhaps call them—on the shores of the Mediterranean. They were all of them in religious difficulties. They had to keep the peace with the old faiths and traditions, and perhaps to assist at sacrifices and processions. They had also to work out philosophical and religious systems of their own. We in these days cannot know what it was to have to look for God, to be dissatisfied with the characters of many so called, and to have to sift carefully every argument and every claim. However, these inquirers started with a vast mass of objective matter—that is, they had before them plenty of objects to speculate upon and take into account. They could not do this at all fairly and seriously without becoming more and more possessed with the belief that there must be a God, that the universe itself, including man, must be Divine in some sense, with a Divine origin, a Divine destination, and Divine relations. Such would be a reasonable faith, justifying a reasonable worship. It would be at once a creed and a philosophy, worked out by man himself from materials found to hand. But here was the difficulty. While man was discovering the One true Almighty God, and, it might almost be said,

inventing a probable theory of Divine relationship—nay, many such theories—he found the Almighty becoming too remote, too far out of his path, and the mediation, or *Logos*, too familiar, too much his own handiwork—indeed, nothing to be much afraid of, and no more to be loved than feared. As there had been gods many and lords many, so there came to be Words many—that is, many conceptions of the Word. Having, as they thought, sufficiently mastered the nature of the Almighty, ascertained His character, prerogatives, and position, they went so far, some of them, as to bind Him by eternal laws to obey the Fates, or some such moral necessity. So even when, with much pains and some courage, they had found the One true God, they do not seem to have thought it a matter that concerned them very much. When the crowd of lesser deities had been deposed and put out of the way, except just to figure in a procession or to adorn a tale, they were content to leave the Almighty in His own cold and dreary heavens, giving the planets their orders, and receiving from them the homage of numbers, rhythm, and song.

One after another, here and there, appeared philosophers, who had to fight their way against old superstitions, political jealousies, the fanciful ideas still prevailing in science, and the moral corruptions which deformed all society. I will only name one of what may be called the transition period. Even Pythagoras had to form his disciples into a secret society, and to

affect mystery. What he taught, or did not teach, can never be known, for what has come down is only the contribution of disciples.

So slow, so difficult, and so obscure have been the great changes in the religious and philosophical systems of the world, that it was a hundred years after the death of the man who for that period passed as its greatest philosopher when Plato saw and defined the difference between the stern uniformity of nature and the changefulness of human actions and human affairs. His predecessors had generally left both much at the mercy of chance, malice, and caprice, making this indeed a very sad world for those who were not inwardly armed with a better creed. Plato saw in human affairs the proof of one supreme God, and the same argument sufficed to prove a living and continual converse between God and man. He maintained that the Almighty is present both in nature and in man, but in different modes and forms, so far as we can see. The Word indeed reveals to us the true significance of all things, whether animate or inanimate; but the Almighty—so I understand Plato—becomes the Word, His own Word, when He enters the sphere of human intelligence, and appears, so to speak, through a human atmosphere. Whatever the distinction is, and whatever it consists in, the human mind cannot help making it. The Almighty it cannot invest with any form, or compare with any being it knows of. On the other hand, that which seems to come

from God to us, and from us to God, it cannot help investing with humanity. In the very expression, the Word of God, we pass at a single bound from the unapproachable and unimaginable Almighty to man himself, and also from this our dark and dismal depth to Heaven's gate. But that which comes down to us in order to lift us up must be distinguishable, so the prince of philosophers and his followers generally believed, from the Deity, the original Source of power. There are distinctions which the mind is forced to make, from mere feebleness, because it cannot embrace varied, indeed multifarious, unities. Yet those distinctions are truths and realities. If we cannot help making them by the irresistible force of our nature, then it is God Himself who makes them.

If any of my readers think that this ancient conception of the *Logos*, or Word, uniting God and man is too hazy for man's short-sightedness, too elastic to have any hold on his wild fancy and capricious tastes, too fanciful to ensure any dutiful compliance or solid advantage, I can only repeat what I have said above, that so it proved, for the world was not very much the better or much the wiser for it, or much more agreed as to the knowledge of God and His ways. In truth, there arose several schools of philosophy, some directly opposed to any notion of a real communication between God and man, of any real condescension or any real hope of elevation. For four centuries the world witnessed the singular spectacle of the

powers of light and the powers of darkness walking amicably side by side, hand in hand, and agreeing to share religion, philosophy, and politics between them.

Neither Pythagoras nor Plato ever ceased to protest against the utter wickedness of the world about them. The former chose for his headquarters the city of Crotona, on the coast of Magna Grecia, as Southern Italy was then called. Curtains and the fabric called cretonne are from that city. It was by no means the most voluptuous and pleasure-seeking place in the world, for that evil eminence had been won by the city of Sybaris, a few miles off. Pythagoras did all he could to seclude his followers, to keep them apart from the evil world, and to fortify them against its vicious example. When Plato, a century after, made Athens the chief seat of philosophy, it had a large population living on art and science. Corinth, only a few miles off, was a seat of commerce and of pleasure, but Athens had lost its political power, and relied rather on its reputation and its memories than on its possessions.

XIII

THE WORD AND JUDAISM

It will be said I have been speaking of the heathen world, and heathen idolaters, and heathen philosophers; but 'What were God's own people doing all this time, enjoying, as they did, His inspiration and His guidance? Had they any such notion as this Word, or *Logos*?' This is a question which much stirred the Fathers of the Church, most of whom, I believe, put it that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Moses, Joshua, David, and the Prophets, was no other than He whom we specially call the Word, and therefore the *Logos* of Greek philosophy. But, if you will think of it, we have no right to expect that this would be so explained to the straiter sort of Jews, or that they would so understand it. It may easily be that it is plainer to us than it was to them. The position of the Jews in the world, and their special mission, was rather negative than positive. From the days of Abraham they had to protest against the surrounding idolatries, debasing worships, and false opinions on religious

matters. Wherever they went, and in all their many wanderings, they had to denounce and keep separate ; sometimes, indeed, to perform sterner functions. Reverence was the one dominant virtue in their religion, and this forbade inquiries into the Divine Nature or Divine operations.

Very recently ingenious writers have been trying to make out changes of view in the Jewish faith, as if it were one ideal of God in one age and another in another. I do not think these writers have made out their case. On the contrary, I see a singularly obstinate uniformity and identity in the religion of the Israelites in all ages, coming down to us in a pure stream from an antiquity of which we have no other like instance. Wherever they went they were surrounded by supposed gods and goddesses, who were also men and women—generally very bad men and very bad women—and they had to beware of the least approach to such conceptions. They were also too occupied with their traditions, too learned in Scripture, and too busy in their own rites and ceremonies to have spare time for philosophy. They were agriculturists, priests, Levites, and lawyers, and there was no class remaining to spend life in philosophical leisure. The freest and most educated class were the Levites, and in course of time they were spread over the earth, first unwillingly and then willingly enough, doing most of the financial business of the world. Jerusalem was not a place for

a man to broach a new idea on the Divine Nature and procedure.

When Alexander founded Alexandria anew, a population had to be found for it, and one abundant supply was ready and at hand. The Jews, after the long ordeals of their Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, now found anything but a settled home in Judæa, and felt themselves at liberty to brave the old warning against returning to Egypt. Indeed, it was no longer Egypt in the old sense, for the Pharaohs were now gone. Soon there were more Jews at Alexandria than at Jerusalem, and, as they were on good terms with the Greeks, and free to think and speak as they pleased, they studied Greek philosophy, and compared it with their own faith. But already, long before this, there had been much communication between Jews and Greeks. It is an old belief, and I think can hardly be doubted, that Plato was acquainted with the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and that this knowledge contributed much to his philosophy. But people had better find this out for themselves, especially as there were strong points of difference, for the Jews were not naturally philosophers, and Plato was not a Jew.

I must say that there is something very suggestive in the fact that, while the Jewish faith and the Greek philosophy are the two great spiritual facts of antiquity that Christians are concerned with, they had at least one radical point of resemblance. In both cases

a single word, a common word, was the starting point, so to speak, of the whole system, and contained its meaning, as the acorn may be said to contain the oak. The two words had much of their meaning in common. The Jewish faith in the Almighty was indicated and forecast from the beginning by the single word 'Said,' which certainly has much in common with *Logos*, the very subject of Plato's philosophy. The two words wonderfully expressed the distinctive characters of the two peoples and the two schools, yet not so as to bar much agreement.

More than six hundred years before Christ a Greek military colony had been settled near the Pelusiac mouth of the Nile, on the highway to Palestine, and afterwards moved into the interior of Egypt. Long before Plato's time a visit to Egypt was an ordinary part of the education of any Greek wishing to become acquainted with the religion, philosophy, manners, customs, and politics of the world.

A century or two before Christ, surrounded by Greek schools and philosophers, a pious Alexandrian Jew wrote a book which obtained a place in the canon of Scripture, and held that place even in our country till the Reformation. This is the 'Wisdom of Solomon.' The plain object of this book was to show to the Jews that they need not shrink from philosophy, for that it chimed in with the sacred history, and to show to the Greeks that they need not suppose their philosophy the only true philosophy in the world, nor

Athens its only home. Later on, indeed, in the time of the Apostles, a Greek wrote a very sensible work to much the same effect, but of a more decidedly philosophical character. These two writers, coming from opposite sides, confirm one another, and so far establish the truth.

This truth is, that there is that which is common to God and man. This is Divine Wisdom, which in man is the perfection of human reason. Our thoughts, so far as they are good, are God's thoughts, and God's thoughts become ours when reduced to our limited conditions. Our conscience, or higher consciousness, is the court in which we converse with the Almighty, we in His presence, He in our inner being. On every new occasion He presents to us the truth, the right, the proper, and the just, the best, and the most seemly or beautiful. But He has endowed us with the high and perilous gift of free will, or choice. Exercised all our lives—more or less wrongly exercised—this leaves a record of wasted opportunities and squandered inheritances. Divine Wisdom, or Truth, no sooner enters our medium than it is refracted and reflected into innumerable earthly forms, far away from the Divine original.

Nevertheless, to us, and to all the sons and daughters of men, Wisdom still cries, still bestows upon us looks more expressive than all human utterances, still warns us that we cannot escape from her so long as our consciousness remains. Could we fly

to the uttermost parts of the earth, or roam in the pathless desert, or bury ourselves in the earth's centre—nay, if we could speed on the wings of light to the most distant star of our universe, the *Logos*, as the Greek philosopher called it—the Wisdom, as the Jewish philosopher called it—the Word, as it stands in the English version—would still be there, bound by no laws of space or time, everywhere and always where God is, and, as far as we are concerned, where we are.

XIV

PHILOSOPHIC *LOGOS* IMPERSONAL

BUT even in this day there are some who would say, Grant there is that which is always coming from God into our hearts, and that it is our fault if we are not returning the various tributes of heart and mind to God. If this *Logos* is to do us any good, it ought to speak to us on our own level, as man to man, and it ought to give us distinct notions of our duty ; it ought to be an example as well as a teacher and preceptor ; it ought to have its part in life, to be mixed in our affairs, to undergo our trials and difficulties, to share our manifold distresses, to pay the debts of our common humanity, to be, in fact, one of us. It's bad enough to have to listen to men mounted in pulpits and safe from contradiction, or writing books from a study, or governing nations from an office or a throne. This we shall always have to endure, and there seems no help for it. But is it also necessary to the order and well-being of this world that we should be continually referred to something in the unseen intangible world of spirits, or what not ? Besides, some will say, if this be all the guidance we are to have—an imagination, a mere cal-

culation—how is man to be kept from doing what he always has done—that is, framing his idea of goodness after his own fancies and wishes? Perfect manhood is quite as indefinite a thing as perfect Godhead, for practically neither is comprehensible. Everybody has his own ideal of a good man—men have one, women have another. Writers pick out their favourites in history and their pet aversions, adorning the former with all the virtues and the latter with all the vices of human nature. There has been absolutely no person in all history, no sovereign, no statesman, no philosopher, no writer, no poet, no divine, upon whom mankind are agreed; and although this tells in favour of a general ideal, as against any particular example, still it is plain that we do not advance much upon ideal suppositions. They leave us to choose our own examples, and in examples we lose the ideal altogether.

The facts of the case themselves prove that something more was wanted than a philosophy of ideals, and of a *Logos* or rational medium between God and man, even if ever so much personified and invested with human attributes. What indeed are the facts of the case? For four centuries, as I have said above, this sublime philosophy, so nearly approaching that of the Bible, dominated over the civilised world. People now talk of the Church and Dissent, orthodoxy, heresy, or schism. Platonism for all that period was the orthodox philosophy, and the other philosophies were

either new changes rung upon it or dissent from it. The *Logos* was recognised in the greatest of intellectual and moral conceptions. But it is still a question what good it did to the world. All the ancient idolatries, superstitions, and every bad religious custom of the old world were kept up for those four hundred years and long after, and few dared, or even wished, to protest against them. What is even more, mankind became worse and worse. The powerful, the clever, the rich, and the eloquent claimed license for all manner of wickedness. The world paid Divine honours to men guilty of every conceivable crime and folly. The first step to power was usually a wholesale massacre of friend and foe. The burden of the moralists and poets was that every generation of men was worse than the one before, and that justice, truth, chastity, domestic life, honest labour, and just content were memories of a past age, to be now sighed for in vain.

The only pleasant bits of humanity in that period are here and there the appearance of some very wise and humble man, content to hold his head low, not to tread on people's corns, as they say, very civil to emperors, only ready to throw in a wise word upon occasion, making as little of himself as possible, even if he were of royal race. The less he said and the less he did, the better. He had to keep within his own circle. He might cultivate a good taste; he might collect pictures, sculptures, and a library. He

might befriend poets, so as he found one or two as wise as himself. To attempt a larger and higher range of well-doing was dangerous, and would not have been successful.

But in dwelling upon the men of that period I have almost forgotten the women. Speaking generally, the women of that age, the age of the sublimest and truest philosophy, had best be forgotten. The less said about them the better. The only excuse for them is the summary way in which they were knocked about from one house to another at the momentary caprice of their temporary lord and master.

I hope I have now conceded to my critical readers all that they would be ready to say as to the good-for-nothingness of a mere philosophy or system of abstract opinions. It is not the way in which the work of the world is done. It is not the medicine for diseased souls, for disordered states, for empires founded on violence and bonded in iniquity, or for a corrupted world. For there was wanted that which St. John relates in the opening verses of his Gospel. 'The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.'

This was indeed a new thing upon earth. It is still so new that the philosophers of our day reject it on account of its novelty, and say that no such thing happened or could happen in the regular order of evolution, which is their substitute for creation. Man,

they say, made himself, and could not at once introduce into the world some one of a different order far above himself. It is contrary to all experience.

But I ask how it is possible to deny that there have been new things, very new indeed, on this earth. As I have said above, only a hundred times my own life ago, there was not a creature on this earth capable of the knowledge of its Maker. The glory of God shone everywhere, and all creation rendered a sort of brute unintelligent homage. There might be angels and other spiritual beings—indeed, in the Book of Job we read that at the Creation all the sons of God shouted for joy. But man was not there, unless we are to accept the opinions of some modern philosophers whom I have already alluded to, viz. that there did once exist, or might exist, creatures just capable of making an arrow-head, or fishhook, a stone axe, or a comb. These philosophers show no wish to magnify the ancestors they are proud to have discovered, and above all things they would not have it supposed that such poor and simple beings had anything to call a faith or a religion.

Leaving our philosophers alone, all agree that if the world existed eight thousand years ago, Man—that is, he whom we now understand by that word—was not there. Surely then it was a very new thing when there was planted first on this earth one who could claim and exercise dominion over it and all its other inhabitants, who could see and hear its Maker, who

could appreciate the grandeur of His works and form just notions of His character. Whatever other creations there were, this was itself a creation. Since that there have been other great novelties which man was strangely slow to discover or invent, and which we must regard as God's doing. All that we can call literature, everything that depends on the art of writing and the use of alphabets, so necessary now to the world that we can hardly imagine the world without it, appeared upon earth less than three thousand years ago, or, say, less than forty times my own life. So this is still a novelty.

I ask, then, why may we not expect, as God's saints and prophets expected, and Greek philosophers expected, and Eastern sages expected, that God would do a new thing, as indeed He may still do? When we think of the very responsible position England occupies in the spiritual welfare of the world, and how little she seems able to do with the hundreds of millions she rules, sometimes with a very strong hand, we should be the last to fear the novelty of a true and only Son of God entering and taking His place in the world. Two very large and important divisions of the human race, both of them face to face with us, have now for near two thousand years resisted this novelty. The Hindoos, chiefly our own fellow-subjects, prefer a degrading polytheism, slightly tinctured, as regards the priesthood and the educated classes, with a weak philosophy. The Chinese have a system

which they cannot explain, and which nobody can explain for them. It appears to be neither theology, nor morality, nor policy. It is described as being chiefly the worship of ancestors. It certainly produces some good and solid results, but upon the whole it is even below the general level of the East. In spite of all their showy and pompous civilisation and their excellence in art and manufacture, the ancient Greeks would have called the Chinese barbarians, and we call them natives, which is much the same thing. Something—indeed, a good deal—is wanting to them, and the want has told with sad effect. That want is that they have not yet received Christ, and know of no personal mediator between God and man

XV

THE WORD A PERSONALITY

It has been often said that the Word of God, if there be such a Word—that is, whatever pretends to be a message from God, a revelation, or a Divine interference—ought to be able to stand any scientific tests and also any moral test that we can fairly apply. It ought to be uniform; it ought to be intelligible; it ought to be a certainty; it ought to show no respect of persons, and not be liable to the charge of partiality, ill-temper, tyranny, or self-assumption. Such qualities are claimed for a good ruler, or a good government, or any well-conducted institution. So much the more ought they to be found in God's work, insomuch that it is absurd to expect anybody to recognise the hand of God in any work wanting these qualities. The persons who thus prescribe what they may expect in God's Word and work think much of themselves on account of the bold stand they suppose they are making for truth, justice, and fair play. They hold themselves to be candid, open to conviction, and ready to give everything a trial.

But there is nothing whatever in this world,

nothing in the best things in this world, nothing in its family life, nothing in its industry, nothing in its politics, nothing in its grandest public organisations, nothing in its history, to justify the requirements of these clever, but exceedingly rash and blind objectors. The Word of God must be expected to resemble the doings of God in the ordinary course of human affairs. Upon any understanding or theory of this world we are certainly face to face with painful difficulties, scandals, mysteries never to be unravelled, sores never to be healed, lamentable inequalities, triumphant violence and inveterate injustice, blunders of policy or of speculation, unaccountable oversights, dark ages, long and universal wars, bloody revolutions, the guilt of which must ever be a matter of controversy, good men doing evil, and evil men doing good. The moral world is not to be easily or completely explained. We cannot understand the ways of God. We cannot even understand the ways of man. Great minds, large hearts, warm hearts, and fiery natures are busy all around us, and we see not what they are coming to. The most prejudiced and the most bigoted find themselves compelled frequently to reconsider and to change their opinions. Acts which they once thought very exceptional they find to fall under rule.

Now all this appertains to what is called personality. We have to deal with persons as well as things. This is so evident that some will think the statement unnecessary; but there are people who never find it

out, and who waste a life, besides immense opportunities and powers, through not knowing they have to deal with free minds and free wills. Their own heads, and hands, too, are so full of earthy matter, physical laws, and unreasoning brutes, that they can never apprehend the real difficulty—the wayward and quite unaccountable wills of men. They fancy they could get on much better if they could clear off the present occupants, and introduce a more compliant and tractable population, but they would only find all their difficulties beginning again.

Of course they who think they could people the earth better than they find it peopled to hand are likely to have much the same opinion of all about them, both those who are over their heads and those who are under their feet. They will measure their superiors, and even their rulers, by the rule of convenience, from their own point of view, and if they are prepared to efface all below, much more will they be to efface all above, leaving themselves at the top of all things. They will never make due allowance for the personal rights, personal honour, and personal peculiarities of anyone whose eminence they think is at their own cost. In effect, they cannot ever understand a free will dominating over their own free will, advising it, guiding it, and even controlling it when necessary.

Personality comes out everywhere. Races have their peculiarities; so have schools of art. A strongly

marked individual character will leave its impress for ages upon the men and things within its reach. So far from events coming by any rule or being in accord with probabilities, it is often said that the only thing that comes to pass is the unexpected. Human affairs are a perpetual clash of free wills. No man can foresee what he will be doing himself to-morrow; much less can he foresee what any other man will be doing, or what the world will be doing. Could a man be so arrogant and so idiotic as to suppose himself capable of impressing his own personality on the whole human race, he would immediately find himself baffled by changes quite beyond anticipation. He would find himself dealing with men, not a garden of cabbage-plants. Wherever we are and whatever we are doing we are confronted with personalities, many, strong, various, and more or less unaccountable. Whenever we turn to God, whether consciously and humbly or unconsciously and presumptuously, we are dealing with an absolutely free will, One who governs free wills, and governs them as they act towards Him and one another.

Thus, whatever may be the case with physical nature, human affairs defy all rule and calculation. We may slowly and with pains acquire a knowledge of character, or, as St. Paul calls it, the discernment of spirits; we may become, by longer experience, sound guessers at probabilities; we may become expert tacticians, as some become clever chess-players;

but the only material part of the whole affair is that we are dealing with an almighty, all-good, and all-wise Person, Who is trying us, not we Him, and Who can do with us as He wills, for our good, and for the good of all concerned. It is not for us to tell Him what He ought to do and to say, what should be His Word to us, and how He should warrant its authority and demonstrate its truth. The world does nothing of the kind. It only warns and teaches us by many a hard lesson of experience to learn wisdom and discrimination for ourselves, and to place ourselves unreservedly in the guidance of an Almighty Friend, Who is always ready to reveal Himself to those who really seek and have resolved to obey Him.

The greatest English general of this century, when in Spain, had to hand over the command of his army for a few hours to another general, of no inconsiderable abilities. 'What's your plan of action?' the latter asked eagerly. 'I don't know,' the chief said; 'but when the enemy have let me know their plan, I'll tell you mine.'

Perhaps it will be replied that our philosophers do not ask for the uniformity of physical law in human affairs, and that they expressly recognise moral laws as well as physical. Indeed many of them make it their special business to discover and ascertain moral laws, and to urge a proper regard to them on the rest of mankind. They recognise, it will be said, laws of morality, of decency, of humanity, of health, of tem-

perance, and even of abstinence. For these purposes they take infinite pains in ascertaining totals, increases, decreases, averages, and in comparing these one with another, as for example the increase of strong drink with the increase of crime. If they do not introduce into these matters the idea of a Divine government, it is because that is very doubtful and quite unnecessary. It is, they say, weakening the case for morality by making it rest on a mere matter of opinion, a quicksand, a dream, something we can never be sure of.

But if the objection of utter uncertainty be true and applicable to an authoritative and Divine system of morality, it certainly applies in a still more demonstrable form to any system founded, we will say, on statistics, or any mere physical test. The heir of a title and estate is warned by some family Mentor that if he lives a 'fast' life he will ruin his health and strength, his fortune and his reputation, and will thereby throw away all the good things in store for him, and incur an old age of decrepitude, ignominy, and vain regrets. He has only to look around him and he will see conspicuous examples that give the lie to these salutary warnings. He will be able to count half a dozen men who have set them at nought and who now find themselves not a bit the worse for it—indeed the better, inasmuch as the knowledge of the world gained by going along with the world has made them masters of the world in their manner and degree.

It is true that the much to be pitied youth we have supposed will see also some examples amply justifying these warnings—human wrecks, scarecrows, monuments of just retribution—that is, if there be retribution in the matter. But in these instances he will have been told, and he will easily believe, that the self-immolated, self-gibbeted victims wanted sense, and suffered by folly, not by sin. He will be further told that a man has only to be careful, to look well about him, to trust nobody, and always to take good care of number one. Thousands every year enter the world with this estimate of the task before them, and of these the great majority, soon or late, find themselves sadly mistaken. Every one of these dupes started by crediting himself with a perfectly free will and a powerful personality, but never taking into account that he was dealing with other perfectly free wills, and in relation with an Almighty. He counted himself well able to estimate probabilities and to strike averages. Such people have no conception of a Divine Word—a continual living discipline by the Master above—till haply they discover it early enough for eternity, though too late for time.

To repeat, in all human affairs we have to deal with persons, and with what we call things. The persons have free wills like our own, though we are apt to think we can understand them better than they can us. The things are the facts of the case, including laws, rules, quantities, qualities, matters,

forces, or what not, all very amenable to calculation. The Almighty is known to us by the facts and laws of nature, and also by His moral work. Nature we count among the things that can be mathematically conceived and comprehended. It is not so in regard to God's moral government. Most people do not even wish to conceive it or comprehend it. They wish to apprehend it hazily and partially, in fact to take it in their own hands and dispense it at pleasure. Yet they cannot escape the uneasy feeling that they are confronted by Someone, they know not Who or What. Their own hearts tell them it is a Person. It is a Being who sometimes whispers, sometimes calls, sometimes encourages, sometimes rebukes. He speaks to the conscience, which requires no interpreter, and has no need of grammars or scientific help. But that Person has to be listened to, invited, and obeyed. That is the Word, and whatever the Word was to Jew or Greek, it is to us the Word that has taken flesh and dwelt among us.

There is much free talk about nature, as if its study must lead to all goodness and truth. Man, a poet tells us, cannot but rise from nature up to nature's God. The expression itself suggests that these two words have to be considered separately, and in mutual relation. What is meant by nature? Does it include man? If so, it includes the separate free wills and distinct characters of countless millions of human beings. If it does not include man, then it stands for

the physical creation, and nothing more. But nature in this sense wants personality. The human soul cannot hold spiritual communication with matter, or with forces and laws. You cannot breathe out your sorrows or your aspirations to the law of gravitation or to the laws of electricity, or to the laws of chemical combination ; nor can you to a telescope and all you see through it, or to a microscope and all you see in it, or to a solar spectrum, or to a rainbow, or to an oak-tree, or to a bed of tulips, or to a prize orchid. You may be deeply interested in the weather, but your devotional feelings find neither scope nor rest there. The young lady of the period will call it 'beastly,' and her male friend will curse it outright. They may both be somewhat in advance of yourself, but even very good Christians do not treat their native sky as respectfully as the Romans did their arbiter of atmospheric differences, Father Jupiter.

On the other hand, the idea of personality is universal ; it ever grows and continually survives. People must believe in some one, lean upon some one, and judge of all things by some one's sayings and doings, if it be only the echo of his voice, the sound of his steps, or the outlines of his figure. In early life the unformed nature may easily direct this sentiment, and even change its object. The young and strong are wise in their own conceit, and they may feel themselves bound to no master, beholden to no benefactor, in need of no guide. The years flow on.

Idol after idol is set up to be thrown down and broken to pieces. What remains is not always, or generally, utter recklessness and self-abandonment. The surviving sentiment is either an idiotic reliance on self or a fond reliance on some one else, the most enthusiastic, or most self-asserting, or simply the most confident person that a man or a woman may happen to know. According to the genius of the country this surviving and absorbing personal idea will be some private acquaintance, or some public character, some hero, or some saint. Perhaps any such idea is better than a conceit of one's own perfect goodness and infallibility. Better worship anything than one's self. But it is impossible to avoid the personal idea, and, unless that be duly recognised, any system, any philosophy, will turn out a rope of sand.

XVI

DUTY OF UNDERSTANDING THE WORD

BUT I know that I am speaking to people who have a distrust—a natural distrust—of theology, of classical learning, of arguments built upon words—indeed, grand arguments built upon very little words. Can the single word *Logos* be of so much account? The word in this sense only occurs in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, the first chapter of his first Epistle, and the nineteenth chapter of the Apocalypse, though the truth expressed by it occurs in many other passages. Some of my readers may think it abrupt and startling that the *Logos* should be He whom we worship as our Lord, our Saviour, and our Redeemer. It reads, they will say to themselves, like a strange transformation—indeed, stranger than a transformation, for it seems a passage from a mere imagination, or mere conclusion of reason, to the greatest and most stupendous of revelations. Well, often have I wished that all Christians were more familiar with the word—the Greek word. I have frequently advised young people—girls as well as boys—to learn just so much of Greek as would enable

them to read and understand the first fourteen verses of St. John's Gospel. They could do it easily, and on that encouragement they would probably go further, without difficulty and with much benefit.

I have given above some illustrations of the word; but, perhaps, the nearest approach to it in our language is Logic, which means the art of using *Logos* properly. The word is translated and used by us in many senses, or, rather, in many changes rung upon one sense. *Logos* means reason—that is, right reason, which raises man above the brute and enables him to converse with God. It means an argument. It means any word, spoken or written, and becoming a communication between one rational being and another. When our Lord says that for every idle word we shall have to render an account, *Logos* is not the term used, but one of less significance. *Logos* means also the most silent exercise of the higher faculties. If we admire, it is *Logos*. If we reverence, it is *Logos*. If we follow some thread of mental association, it is *Logos*; nor would it be possible quite to exclude our dreams. If we ask ourselves how we came here, how the world came to be, or what will come of us and of the world, all that is *Logos*. But the more pious of the old philosophers kept the Almighty always before them in this matter. *Logos* was Divine, and it was an effluence from God. It was perfected thought, feeling, and converse.

It bound together all humanity, and, together

with it, other orders of beings that the ancient philosophers were ready—indeed, willing—to believe in—demigods, heroes, powers, messengers, conveyers of oracular responses, and glorified men. Through these all Divine reason, or *Logos*, reached the abode of the gods—gods one in nature and action, however numerous and various in person and office—and ascended even to the conception of One over all, containing all, and represented by all. It was their ladder that reached to heaven, and showing angels ascending and descending.

Now, I am sure that if this word had never appeared in the Bible in its current, philosophical sense, that would have been one of the chief arguments against the truth and authority of the Bible as the Word of God. It would have been said, 'Here is a philosophy very like your religion; here is a deduction of reason, personified into a being very like your Son of God; here is a "God and man" very like yours, and here is a learned and eloquent Greek philosopher, one Plotinus, writing at large on this subject, while Jesus Christ was on earth, and probably before your Evangelists and Apostles were writing their respective works. All this was the current literature of the day. Yet we find not the slightest allusion to it in the new volume of Scripture you have added to the old.'

So, to meet this inevitable objection, and to state the simple fact, there is just sufficient recognition of

the great and then universal doctrine of the *Logos*, or word between God and man. This is done by the very few passages quoted above. For the great heathen conception of a living medium between God and man, St. John claims that it was with God in and from the Creation, that it is of God, and that it has taken human nature in Christ. On the authority of St. John the Divine *Logos* is a necessary link, or step, in the proof of the Divine character of Jesus Christ. The 'Word' accordingly became the centre of the greatest controversy that has ever divided the Church of Christ; and when the Church's Creed was finally settled, in much its present form, it was then thought best to let the word *Logos* drop out of the reckoning, as having done its duty and become no longer necessary.

Yet it is plainly our duty to understand it as well as we can, seeing that the doctrine of our Creeds, our Articles, and our Services is founded upon it, and Christians did not begin to talk about a Trinity, Three Persons in One Godhead, Three in One and One in Three, till they had generally satisfied themselves they knew what was meant by the *Logos*. Some will ask, 'Why take us back to those evil days? Why run the risk of unsettling so old a settlement?' But the sad truth is, the whole matter is already unsettled. The whole controversy is reopened. All the questions that agitated the primitive Church are asked again, quite as loudly and quite as

irreverently. I am sure that we ought to know what St. John meant by *Logos*, and also to take our stand upon it.

At the risk of repeating myself, and, perhaps, of seeming to vary, the *Logos* is that of Almighty God which He has added to our own knowledge and consciousness, and which enables us to conceive truly of Him and His works, to love Him, to fear Him, to obey Him, and to worship Him, and so to do our duty to Him and to one another. Let my readers try to find an English word for this, and they will see how language fails. It cannot but fail, for in truth this is God in us. It is God in man in an infinitely higher and more real sense than in any other creature that we know of.

XVII

'THOUGHT'

In all ages, and all over the world, there have been the same great difficulties and consequent differences in the conception of God Almighty and of what He is to man. There are indeed persons who tell us that we 'think' in these days, and criticise, and that 'Thought' has settled some questions and criticism other questions finally and beyond further dispute. We may indeed criticise more than the ancients did, for there is now a greater mass of records and other writings to criticise; but we certainly do not 'think' more. The Greeks, who by Divine dispensation had charge of the human mind for many centuries before Christ, and who educated it for Him, and provided it with a proper language, were the first and greatest of thinkers, and have not yet been surpassed. We have not beaten them in poetry or in any kind of writing; we have not beaten them in architecture or in sculpture; we have not beaten them in philosophy or in 'Thought.' The greatest thinkers find their minds cleared when they turn to the pages of a Greek philosopher.

So what is the victory claimed for 'Thought' over all that is called religion in these days? It is simply that people find it easier and pleasanter to think about earthly matters—that is, matter, and man in his earthly character—than about God, or any supposed existences or relations beyond the visible creation. There are people, quite respectable people, and in good society, who say that Christ would have been detected, exposed, and speedily forgotten, had there been 'Thought' in those days. He could not have stood, they say, its searching, scrutinising gaze. I repeat, that there was far more 'Thought' in those days than now, and that the light it threw on all important questions was far more burning than it is now. Of course 'Thought' then, as now, had to encounter those who did not like to think except just as suited their tastes, their convenience, their prejudices, and their habits. In the heathen world there were those who believed, or at least taught and practised, that matter was everything, eternal, indestructible, unconquerable, uncontrollable, conducting itself partly haphazard, partly by laws of its own—that is, by a sort of necessity, indeed, ill or well as might be, and warning men to keep a good look-out if they would avoid its collisions and disasters.

The highest religion people need have in such a theory would be that of the Swiss tourist who is directed not to speak, or cough, or stumble, lest he start the huge mass of snow over his head, and

ready to descend in an avalanche. Its one command was, 'Don't provoke slumbering Chaos. Don't offend the malicious destinies.'

Another company of thinkers, guarding themselves with a strictly limited liability, thought that God, or the gods, might be safely put out of the question, inasmuch as they clearly put us out of the question, and we need only follow their example. It was pleasant indeed to imagine the existence of beings under much happier circumstances than our own, in a higher and lighter region of the atmosphere, possessing greater freedom of action and speculation, without our burdens, our dangers, or our temptations, and enjoying themselves much at the expense of poor blundering, stumbling, and benighted mortals below. It was supposed they wanted nothing from us, and that we could give them nothing if they did. This being the case, mortals had only to follow the example of the gods, and enjoy themselves as well as they could with such means of comfort and happiness as the world below provided. This, of course, they would do according to their own nature, for no doubt the man of cultivated intellect was capable of far higher pleasures than the labourer, the mechanic, the slave, or the sot.

The two classes of organised rebels against high and holy 'Thought' that I have described were the Stoics and the Epicureans, both of whom St. Paul, and no doubt St. John also, had often to encounter. They did not hold a strong or permanent hold on the human mind.

They were not consistent with themselves. They could not wholly throw out of count thoughts and facts that upset their calculations. A public or private disaster, a thunderstorm, an unexpected flash of lightning, the fall of a tree overhead, the ruin of a political party, or disappointment in love, the loss of a dear friend or only child, a painful illness, jealousy of a favoured rival, indeed almost any trifle, threw out all the calculations upon which these two sects were founded, and then the unhappy thinkers came back, limping and mendicants as it were, to the sublimer 'Thought' that had possessed their earlier, fresher, and purer days.

They now felt that there was something besides matter, and some One besides themselves. They saw that matter failed, and that man was a predestined failure, too, unless he could make out that he was something better than the cattle in his fields and the flowers in his gardens. Into the further regions of 'Thought' these disappointed, heart-broken philosophers might not now be able to advance with their ruffled plumage and drooping wings, but they felt they had staked all on one venture, and had lost all except a hope and a prayer that might or might not reach One who could hear it.

Mind, these were men who thought themselves thinkers. They imagined they were thinking out the great secrets of existence and the mysteries of the universe for themselves, and they were particularly jealous of the dominant philosophy. Now I ask, do not these

two sects of false philosophers find their fellows in the great pretenders to 'Thought' in these days? Go to the headquarters of science, luxury, and social power, and there you find thinkers who say there is nothing to be thought of but matter, its invariable laws and its manifold adaptation to human convenience, and man, so far as he, too, is matter; and those other thinkers who tell you that interest, pleasure, pomp, and pride are all that a man need care about and can really reckon upon.

But the greatest philosopher of the heathen world was not infallible, and he knew it. He confessed there was much that he could not account for. Both what we call nature and what we call human affairs are full of apparent violences, mishaps, wrecks, and conclusions contrary to any just expectation. The wisest and best management is liable to be embarrassed and frustrated. What so necessary to human life as agriculture, seamanship, statesmanship, and indeed all the arts? But they are continually, and often cruelly, baffled. How is this, on the supposition of an all-wise, all-good, all-powerful Deity? Plato conceived that matter itself, necessarily an element in all human affairs, was yet not wholly tractable. It might still retain the vices of old Chaos, or the traces of some old and evil system. All that can be said for Plato is that the facts remain the same to-day—that is, the facts from which he took refuge in this theory; and I cannot help thinking that people, even good Christians,

reason upon those facts much in the same way that the old Pagans did, at least with as little religion and common reason. They think too much of matter and too little of its Maker and Governor, and too little also of the immense difference there is between material and moral ills. Man is a free agent, and has to choose between good and evil, which could not be if there were no evil. Whoever chooses the evil, as all do to some extent, leaves thereby an evil, perhaps endless, strain in the whole social fabric, contributing to the difficulties and dangers of all that ever come in its way. How evil came into the world must ever remain a matter for philosophies and creeds, but if a man wishes to know how it is transmitted from generation to generation, a single look inwards will answer that question.

XVIII

SEEN AND UNSEEN

THAT which takes to itself the title of 'Thought' in these days, and which claims for itself the right of admitting or excluding an Almighty from the universe, makes its own use of the difference between the seen and the unseen. In all that we can see, or hear, or feel, or taste, or measure, or weigh, 'Thought' obtains grand successes and brilliant triumphs. So it will have it that there is nothing better worth troubling about. There can be no certainty about the unseen, it says, whereas science is daily extending the bounds of certain knowledge into the far and the near, into the remote heavens, and into the structure of the minutest organism and the compactest material. The laws of nature, it says, are daily revealing themselves in variety, in range, and in exactness. The finest intellect finds full scope here, and is rewarded with new discoveries. The unseen, on the contrary, is the realm of fancy, fiction, idle dreams, prejudices, mental aberration, gloomy and misleading twilight, chases after nothing, wrong scents, nightmares, will-o'-the-

wisps, and all that the truly serious and enlightened mind abhors.

Before people finally devote themselves to the seen in preference to the unseen, it is well they should know what they are giving up, or propose to give up, or imagine they are about to give up. God is unseen, and if there be any intelligent beings in the world not of our own order they are unseen. The human soul is unseen—one's own soul and the soul of every other human being. You see not what your dearest friend or life's companion sees, or hears, or knows, or intends, or remembers. You are daily and hourly surrounded by living, indeed vivid, centres of thought and action, yet you can see nothing of their mental activity, and cannot find it out, except slowly, partially, and often to no purpose. The absent is unseen. Distance matters not in that case. The future is unseen. The past is unseen. What you intend has no real existence—indeed, may never have, inasmuch as you, and the others concerned in your intention, may not be alive a minute hence. What you remember is unseen, and you have to trust to fallible mediums when you try to bring it to the 'mind's eye.' Not only the systems of theologians, but all the machinations of politicians, all the schemes of the greedy and lustful, all the fancies of the poet, the devotion of the saint, and the folly of the sinner, are unseen. The recollections of even a small company might fill a library, but you see none of them. Everything

whatever that the eye can note is enveloped in a haze of uncertainty.

On the contrary, so long as you live, and are awake, and in your usual health, you have the unseen always with you—that is, you carry about with you your memory, your interests, your notions of persons and things, your ideas, your hopes and fears, your certainties and your doubts—all, indeed, that makes you what you are. The unseen is inalienable. Men cannot rob you of it. Time cannot. Death cannot. The whole world cannot. That is, ordinarily, for a higher Power may strip you of all your intellectual belongings, as of life and existence itself. What I am saying relates to the present stage of our being.

Moreover, everybody is aware that he cannot make a good use of this world unless he gives most of his attention to the unseen, ascertains it as far as possible, discovers its true bearings, and supplies by mental acumen the many and great shortcomings of sense—that is, of the bodily senses. No one can get on well in any employment or profession or trade unless he has some moral qualities, such as industry, patience, courage, and self-denial, and unless he has some knowledge of character, and so knows whom to employ and how far he can trust. Everybody has to calculate chances, and run as little risk as possible. Everybody has to show kindness, confidence, and good taste, otherwise he will alienate one by one all about him. Thus he cannot make use of the seen,

unless he has also that which is unseen, and can make proper use of it.

It is true that any exclusive study of the unseen —as, for example, of theology, metaphysics, Biblical or heathen antiquities, or ancient history—may make a man absent in company and out of touch with the living world, as well as dead to nature; but it is equally certain that if a man gives himself up entirely to any material study, whether in the way of business or in the pursuit of knowledge, he will lose perception and tact in his dealing with the unseen.

Thus the common objection that we cannot really and perfectly learn anything about God and spiritual matters, for they are not reducible to the test of sense, is found to apply to the whole work of life—indeed, cannot be quite excluded from the meanest and most mechanical operations.

The truth is, your ideas, whatever they be, are more to you than all the world, and it is incumbent on you to cultivate them, to correct them, to find their proper form and direction. They are your holding, your garden, your estate, your kingdom, your fortune, be it great or little, and it is for you to practise upon them the best husbandry you can. Above all, it is necessary to bear in mind that all you carry in memory, heart, mind, all you know or feel or intend, lies ever open to the eye of that Almighty who gives you the power to create your own ideal world.

XIX

'IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD'

THIS is the first of three distinct statements, each immeasurably important, each linking the comprehen sible with the incomprehensible, each reconciling and identifying opposites, each necessary to Christian truth —indeed, impossible to be avoided. The subject of these statements, or that which is spoken of, is the Word, which, as would first strike the mind of any reader of the least education, must be the Greek *Logos*, a creation and growth of human philosophy. It was the great discovery, and, as had been supposed, the final triumph, of Greek thought. It was only as Jew and Greek had become better acquainted with one another that they had discovered they had all along been thinking the same thing, and that what the Greeks had deemed their own invention had existed in the beginning, with God, and of God.

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' We cannot pretend to define the 'beginning,' for we can form no probable notion of it. We can only ask questions that no man can answer. Was it the beginning or

creation of this planet, or of this system, or of the universe of millions of millions of suns and planets? Was it the act of a single week, or of all eternity, reckoning backwards? How far does creation go back? How long has the universe been peopled? Were I to live all my long life over again, and make much better use of it than I have, I am quite sure I should never be a bit more able to answer these questions than I am now. Nor can I see the least necessity for answering them, or the least use in the attempt to answer them.

After the interval of a few weeks I find myself reading the last paragraph with the aid of second thoughts, and feeling that I have sometimes been too defiant and provocative. I would never quarrel with any students or inquirers who keep to their own lines. Impossible questions, foolish questions, and all but wicked questions have often led to actual and useful discoveries. Every fresh addition to the gains of science cannot fail to be good, as far as it goes, even though it be infinitely short of expectation. But if the inquiry starts with the foregone conclusion that there exists nothing that cannot be brought within the laws of matter, I must call that not an inquiry, but a rebellion.

As far as man can penetrate backwards, forwards, all round, there reigns the law of order, and there rushes onwards the voice of command. Creation is not stationary. It does not stand to be looked at,

tested, measured, and surveyed. We are part of it, and cannot take up a position outside of it. So intimately are we ourselves blended with the act that we seem to be left to judge for ourselves whether we be not ourselves creators as well as created. We cannot assign limits of space or time to that which envelopes ourselves and expands our thoughts to all space and all time. Command is the one overpowering note of creation. All nature in its unchangeable laws, all history in its destinies and its retributions, rings with command; youth hears command, manhood discharges its behests, and age tells the tale of obedience or revolt. Nations are founded on command, and if but a link of authority or a thread of tradition be lost, they search till they find it, and learn to know what they have lost.

When was given the mighty, universal, irresistible impulse? In the record of the Creation we read 'God said, Let there be light, and there was light.' All the ten acts of creation were Divine commands, in the same words, followed by immediate fulfilment. 'God said, Let there be,' is all the account we have of the Will and the Power that created the universe, and of that being who is infinitely greater than all other created life, man himself, created to occupy the void space between them and God, and to be, under Him, their lord and master. In these words, 'God said, Let there be,' we have the all-powerful, ever-living Word of God. The human mind cannot comprehend

that Word. The imagination cannot fashion it or measure it. The Word spoken, if we may venture to use that phrase, was heard and obeyed throughout all space. We can think of it as an instrumental power and a Divine agency. Long before Christ came the Jewish theologians had become accustomed to personify the Divine command coupled with the actual obedience. This they did the more freely as they saw in the names of God the signs of a plurality. The Almighty conferred, consulted, stated His wishes, commanded, and was obeyed. How this could be passed their understanding, but they saw no reason why it should not be true for all that. Creation was not once for all; it is a continuous act—continued, indeed, to this day, and how much longer none can tell—and this implies a continual command, and continual instrumentality, and continual obedience. The pious Jews recognised in all the glories of nature, and in all the noble deeds of good men, a universal response to the first and last 'Let there be,' and in that way they filled the void between God and man.

When the Church of Christ found itself on the point of union and identification with the Empire, and so forming that alloy of which the Papacy and its numerous rivals and imitators are composed, then philosophical theologians sprang up and multiplied, and fought for the new glories which earth was now offering to them. They devised hard questions which no man could answer, and as they presented the

sword, or a still more cruel banishment, they got many more answers from the lips than from the human understanding. Was there ever a time when the Son of God was not?

To such a question I should now render no answer; indeed, I could not honestly answer, seeing that I can form no notion of time before creation, and creation itself I cannot measure by the scale of time. Nor can I distinctly estimate the relations between the Father and the Son when there was no creation. Our Lord, indeed, spoke of the glory He had with the Father before the world began, and that is a glimpse of the infinite, but no more. My mind recoils utterly from the supposition of a solitary God, absolutely alone in the universal void, intending from all eternity to do something which on the supposition required no assistance, no favourable opportunity, no incubation. Nor can I imagine this eternal solitude relieved, and this eternal inaction explained, by that communion of Father, Son, and Spirit which a poet may please to imagine and realise. Nothing can be more foreign to all our natural and spontaneous ideas of useful existence, of profitable intercourse, and of Deity itself.

I may add that nothing can be more unlike the notion of God Almighty beaming on us from every page of Holy Scripture. The first word of St. John's Gospel is also the first word of Genesis, and has not a defined meaning. The adjective formed from it is

translated in the Sermon on the Mount, 'them of old time'—that is, the traditional interpreters of the Law of Moses. We gain nothing by the attempt to force upon words mathematical senses—that is, exact senses—when they do not bring us one step nearer to Divine truth.

XX

'ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM'

BY whom? Undoubtedly by the Word. St. John seems to take extraordinary pains to leave no doubt on that point. In the previous verse he repeats what he had just said, in order to show whom he is speaking of—not the Father, but the Word. This seems almost to contradict the first words of Genesis, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' In the Gospel we are told, on the contrary, that all things were made by the Word, the *Logos*. But plainly there is no contradiction. We cannot suppose that St. John would weaken the authority of Scripture, or try to blunt its sense or turn its point. Nor is there anything strange or new in dividing an act according to the parts taken in it. But there never was such an act as this, either before or since, that we know of; and when we read in one place of God making all things, and in another place of all things being made by the Word, we must acknowledge, on the one hand, the necessity of putting some sense upon the two statements, and, on the other hand, the impossibility of putting a sense upon them

that shall not fall far short of the reality, if not off the mark altogether.

What is here meant by the word 'by'? The Greek word is more usually translated 'through,' but these prepositions have no fixed sense in themselves. They receive their sense from the context. The question is not what the word means generally, but what it means in this text. Here we have the creation, and they who are concerned in the creation—in all creation. In the first place there is the Father Almighty, whom we designate in the so-called Apostles' Creed 'Maker of heaven and earth,' and in the so-called Nicene Creed, 'Maker of all things visible and invisible.' Then in what sense—for it must needs be a different sense—is the Word, the *Logos*, said to be Maker? Here, however, the statement is that all things were made by Him, or through Him. What do these words mean? We must return to what has been said above of the Word, or *Logos*. It is that of God which, being God, is also in the hearts and minds of all intelligent beings, and which enables them to form true notions of God, to have proper affections towards Him, to converse with Him, to obey Him, and to know themselves and what they are made for. This Word is a living and life-giving reality. In intelligent beings it is the soul of order, of goodness, of harmony, of symmetry, of utility, of fellow-working to the truest and noblest ends, and of that vast constructive power that man is so proud to possess and

to exercise, though so often for foolish, fantastic, extravagant, and even wicked purposes.

This Word, or *Logos*, we feel must have had His work in creation. If the translation 'by' seems to exclude the Almighty, and introduce another Creator, the translation 'through' seems to fall short of the truth. St. John seems to have been labouring to reveal and compass the truth, and we cannot do less or more. The Fathers of the Church gave him the eagle as his proper emblem, because that bird is supposed to fly highest, and to look the sun in the face without being blinded or dazed. We cannot expect to rise higher or to penetrate deeper into the Divine Nature, power, and operations.

It is enough for the present that I should again remind my readers of a very sublime yet very simple argument that we find in the mouth of an Apostle, and which we find in the Book of Psalms. This earth certainly requires an inhabitant as lord and master. Inanimate nature, indeed, is but a grave, where all things are forgotten—indeed have never been noted at all by all but one order of its inhabitants. The very highest orders of the brute creation know nothing of this earth, except so far as it satisfies their daily wants. Man is true lord and master. But he is plainly a deposed monarch, a degraded officer, an heir who has himself parted with his blessing and his birthright, a son who has seized his share and spent it in riotous living in a far country.

The philosophers of our day repudiate the Divine character of the inheritance, and say there is no God who has made it, given it, and will one day demand an account of it. Men now feel themselves masters of the earth by conquest, by discovery, by purchase, by survival, or in any way that shall effectually put God out of the matter, and leave them quite at liberty to do as they like with their own.

History, from the earliest to the latest record, every year and every day, gives one unanswerable rebuke to their presumption. It proclaims one continual series of lamentable or ridiculous failures. The proudest achievements of one age are the sorrow, the resentment, or the jest of the next. We have indeed advanced somewhat upon the not so very remote periods when the earth was full of violence, when life was cheap and wretched, and when the profoundest ignorance was deemed the highest bliss for ordinary mortals. Still in any moral or political question the last record is failure, disaster, and disgrace. Where exists, then, the man for whom this earth was made, and who has come into his own? Man, as he is, never will understand this world, never will enjoy it in a reasonable fashion. We are driven to look for its true Lord elsewhere. If Christ be not He, then we seem condemned to look for Him in vain.

Science brings out every day what saint and sage fondly dwelt upon—the intimate relations of the universe to the higher as well as the common needs

of humanity. Material philosophers indirectly and unwittingly testify to the fact by supposing man to have been a spontaneous growth of the universe, which, after countless ages of labour, with the most abortive and ghastly results, suddenly—indeed, quite the other day—accidentally developed man, who, by some disease or malformation or pure accident, found or fancied himself at home in this world and lord of all creation. Such is the material account of man, or one of the many. It testifies at least to the fact that man and all creation are what is called homogeneous—that is, of the same matter, as far as matter is concerned. He is not a distinct element of material existence. There are more than seventy such distinct elements, but the matter of man is not one of them, any more than the matter of a dog or a cow. His distinctness, his immeasurable superiority, his ever-growing lordship, must arise from other components of his complex nature. That must be his spiritual part. To be master of the universe, its true lord and master, demands infinitely more than his material or physical part.

If, as we cannot doubt, man and the universe are the work of the same Being, then one is made for the other, and that one is the type to which the other is adjusted. Now, is this world made for man, or man for the world? Has man grown out of the earth as the ancients fabled that creatures grew out of the mud of the Nile? Surely the world is made for man, in accordance with his nature, to nurse him, to

educate him, to raise him to a higher life. Yet of no one mortal man can it be said that earth was made for him. It cannot even be said that it was made for humanity as it is. It was made for perfect humanity, human and Divine. This perfect humanity is the Word, the *Logos*, that of Almighty God that reaches the heart and mind of man, though now not fully comprehended.

That the universe should be made for Him we can at least conceive ; that it should be made through Him, and that He should have a certain ministerial part in the creation, we are also encouraged to conceive ; that it was made by Him, can only be true in a spiritual sense beyond the reach of our present understandings ; nor can I believe that Scripture warrants the sense of simple agency. Plato indeed taught, or suggested, that the Supreme Being delegated to inferior or subordinate divinities the formation of worlds ; but that cannot be what St. John intended to say. He might indeed mean that Plato had a glimpse or shadow of the coming revelation, which it was his own office to show to the Church and to the prepared world.

XXI

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

We may honestly and rightfully believe that this Word, or *Logos*, is the Son of God, the only begotten Son—that is, the only Son fully partaking of the Divine Nature, and fulfilling the idea of Sonship. But this Word, St. John tells us, became flesh, and dwelt among us. Flesh here means not simply the material or physical components of our mortal frame, but humanity, which is more than flesh and blood. So at least do Christians believe, as did the pious Jews and pious Gentiles at the Christian era. We none of us find the least difficulty in supposing a stage of conscious existence in which the soul will be delivered from the burden of the flesh. We can also readily understand in some general sense that the Word dwelt among us.

Yet it has often been asked in what particular sense St. John used this phrase. It is from scene or tent. Does it mean that the Son of God covered Himself with the human form, even as many creatures envelop themselves in coats or shells? Does it mean that His life on earth might be likened to that of the

patriarchs dwelling in tents, and having no house or fixed resting-place? Does it refer to the tent life of the Children of Israel wandering in the wilderness? Does it allude to the indwelling of God in the Holy of Holies or innermost part of the Tabernacle?

In those early days tent life was much more common than now. All over the world there were large bodies, indeed whole nations, moving about with as many tents as they could manage to carry, and it was impossible for great personages to make a long journey without tents. When they arrived at a good town they would often find it safer and healthier to pitch their tents outside. To this day an English lady visiting the Holy City, with a proper escort and ample means, is advised to pitch her tent, sometimes a dozen tents, outside the gates. We need not therefore try to render the phrase 'dwelt' more exactly than our Versions do.

Upon the indwelling of Christ in His Church, and in each member of it, there are many different views or opinions, which, for aught I can see, may all come to the same thing. We know that men are more prone to insist on their differences than on their agreements. But there is one point in which it does not require a theologian, or a man of any particular school, to see a very great fact. It is that since Christ came, and from the time of His coming, there has been a wonderful change in the world, and a change for the better. I will not deny that there have been, and are still, lamentable exceptions and

serious deductions from this fact. But upon the whole man has become more Divine, and his notion of God more humane. God and man have been more at one, in act and in word. The Word—that is, the *Logos*—has been freer, more evident, brighter to the sense, and warmer to the heart. The Word—that is, Reason in its highest sense, or Thought in its only true sense—is no longer an extravagant and often wicked mythology, or a worship of nature, or of the elements, or of the heavenly bodies, or of the types of animal life, or a dreary and barren philosophy like the dull and melancholy dreams that scarcely interrupt the spiritual slumber of Eastern nations. It now represents the highest aspirations and noblest activity of man, in subordination to the grandest and purest conception of God.

I know it will be replied that this blessed change may be imagined, hoped for, expected, professed, claimed, preached, taught, and counted upon, but that it has not been realised, and is even now far from being realised. Such an estimate of the fact must depend very much on each person's singleness of eye, mind, and purpose, but even if it be too true that Christians imagine, hope, expect, profess, claim, preach, teach, and count upon more than they actually do or find done, it is plain that the idea or standard of human perfection is far higher and much more real than it was in the dark days of Paganism.

A higher standard is confessed and avowed, when

Christian writers lament the shortcomings and inconsistencies of professing Christians, and when the various divisions of the Church are criticising and censuring one another. Even hypocrisy has its uses and its limits, for they who start with preaching to others sometimes find themselves their own hearers, and they who were only acting a part unexpectedly find themselves honest men. No candid critic or reader of history can dispute that the world is very, very much better now than it was in the centuries immediately before Christ, including even the Augustan age of Rome. The conception of a deified man existed, indeed prevailed, then, as it had done from the earliest ages, but what a man it was, what a god it was that the ancients generally made into one impossible god and man. We charitably put an allegorical or emblematic sense on the monstrous creations of their folly or wickedness.

Now, in what I have just been saying, I have not attempted to go beyond this world and its narrow grounds of certainty. It has been scarcely theological, for I think any schoolboy or any candid unbeliever may—indeed must—see the truth of it. In the common human estimate, religion, morals, politics, poetry, and philosophy, the human mind and its current ideas have become both more humane and more Divine, and in that quite intelligible sense the Word—*Logos*, Thought—has taken flesh and dwelt among us.

As I have said above, this is not all, but when we

see so much, we must conclude it to be the pledge and earnest of more. Man—that is, civilised man—is a far higher being than he was two thousand years ago. Even if his pretensions are more striking than his attainments, and even if we find we have to prune every record, whether of nations or of individuals, and take them only for what they are worth, still there has been more than an improvement—there has been an actual change of heart, mind, and soul.

And now I have to add what some will say is going out of this world, and which links a plain fact with the grandest of theological lessons. This change in the heart, mind, soul, habits, and manners of men is itself an act of the Word, or *Logos*. It is not man alone, or some chance power, that has done this, it is God in us, revealing to us His only Son, and teaching us thereby how we also may be, and indeed are, His sons.

XXII

NATURE DEAD

THERE is a sad and solemn thought that sometimes suggests itself, not only in our troubles and our fits of melancholy, but, perhaps, even more sadly in our joys, and when we would be happy. It is that nature cannot sympathise with us, or know anything about us, or have any true communion with us. When a man has made up his mind to spend days, or months, on the melancholy ocean, as some one called it, or between barren sand and scorching sun, or upon eternal ice and snow, he may endure with equanimity the grim and taciturn companionship of nothingness. It is better, at least, than solitary confinement in a cell. It is better than many a bed of pain and weakness. It is better than the human companionship which some people have to put up with. But the same feeling of solitariness may—indeed, must—intrude in the most beautiful spots on the earth, where nature is all life and beauty and gaiety, and all kinds of creatures present themselves, as once they did to our first parent, asking for his admiration and solemn recognition. The sun is reflected from innumerable and

infinitely various objects, animate or inanimate, moving or still, and in his changing lights the monotonous down, the grey cliff, the purple hill, and the barren sands have their charms. The air is filled with life in its gayest and most fantastic forms, and even with sound and song. But none of these creatures know what they are, or who made them and loves them, or have more than a brief, narrow, and purely instinctive knowledge of one another. Few of them have any knowledge of father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, or community, beyond what is a condition of existence from one hour to another. They are a soulless creation. Man exercises his lordship over them with cruel selfishness, or wanton caprice.

With the more useful creatures man's own convenience is his only rule, and if he has an occasional compunction he silences it with the reflection that the poor creatures know not how they are wronged. If they show promise of a brief dignity, and a singular winningness in the relation of mother and child, man dashes from them this single cup of sweetness. But, like all tyrants and oppressors, he has his few favourites. They come and go, and are fast forgotten. They are but pale reflections of himself, for they do only as they are done by, and are what he makes them. He may wish, but, so far as he knows, he wishes in vain, that their plastic nature will survive the clay they are made of. All this is sad, for it makes a family of pets a real solitude.

Poets labour to brighten and enliven this grave, as we must call that which contains only perishable and unconscious forms of vitality, with their own spiritual creations. They give life, and love, and social relation to flowers and trees, to rivers and lakes, to valleys and mountains, to the storm and to the calm. But fiction soon wearies itself when it would force life into that which has not life in itself, and a sense of unreality possesses the reader from the beginning to the end of the dreary tale. This, then, is a dead world. Yet we are told in a thousand texts that it is full of glory, and that the universe audibly tells of God.

But this glory is the Word of God, beaming to us through His works, and reflected from them. This glory is not in the creation itself, but in the hearts of those who can see and feel the glory by the Spirit of God in them. The whole brute creation, with all its wonderful instincts, so far surpassing human reason within a certain range, is blind to it. If I should say that any man, or any class of men, are as blind to it as the poor brutes, I should provoke a challenge, and have to explain. Now, it is true that an atheist, a sot, and perhaps even an idiot, would rather walk between banks of primroses, ground ivy, and periwinkles than between stone walls, wooden rails, or clipped hedgerows. It is true that an atheist may even rejoice in the study of nature, and do good service therein. It is true that a bad man may be a

savant and a naturalist. It is true that the very name of God may be banished from the halls and temples of science. Of course, if these men do not see God through His works, they do not see His glory, and the Word of God finds no place in their hearts. What they see is to them a perishing thing, with no future, no moral relations, and not a thing to thank God for, because they see no God in the matter.

When Linné, the Swedish naturalist, first saw a Scotch hillside one blaze of gorse, he fell on his knees and thanked God that he had lived to see such glory. To him it was the Burning Bush, and he felt in God's presence. Without that sense the greatest transport of admiration must soon bethink itself, and allow itself to die out, for fear of sadder consequence.

The old Epicureans were not the coarse people some have supposed. They had refined and cultivated tastes ; they loved wit and beauty, the festive wreath, the fresh perfume, the play of words, the song, the creations of art, and whatever science could tell them in those days. But no sooner had they given way to the first impressions than there ensued a shade of sorrow, not to say despair. They had none to thank, none to share their joy ; the fount of bliss now welled with bitterness, and wit itself was its own scoffer ; for all this had no future, and was already rank with the scent of the grave.

Thus nature is dead, and the enjoyment of nature is but a fleeting dream, or a forced and momentary

mirth, to those who see not God in nature, and One who can sympathise with man, and feel his sympathy. To be habitually insensible to nature is to be insensible to the God of nature—that is, the Word of God reaching us through nature. Whatever it is that alienates a man from his God must be something that is alienating him from his natural surroundings, and rendering him deaf and blind to the most beautiful of lessons. He is too full of himself, of his own wishes, his own schemes, his own operations, to notice the poor little flowers lying in wait to catch his eye. He is scanning earth too covetously to care for the heavens above, that defy fences and landmarks, and refuse to be owned, not willing to be in bondage to any man. The air is thick with his own fancies, or with the whirls of his own passion, and he cannot read the golden legend of a created, renewed, and glorified world. It is commonly said that God made nature, and man made the town. Whatever degree of truth there be in this, the difference in the man himself is far greater than that in his place and circumstances, for while one man sees the work of God in a smoky town, another may not see it in a garden of Eden.

If nature, then, be dead, it is as the Letter is dead till the Life is in it. To those who have this Life, or who can read the book, nature is full of significance. It represents, as with the hand of an accomplished artist, everything that human life can show. It has its sleep and its wakings, its long

inchoations, and its burstings into life and beauty ; its fits of gloom, its awful forebodings, its sudden revolutions, its brief anarchies, its processional grandeur, and its days that seem rather a foretaste of heaven than part of any natural order. The Word is here, but it is in the hearts of those who can feel the glory of God reflected back from His creatures.

In its infinitely varied and ever-changing effects, nature, dead though we must reckon it, is always appealing to the higher life that is in us. Its alternate frowns and smiles, its dulness and its glory, its ruins and its resurrections, its wars and its truces, its inactivity and its vigour, sufficiently tell their own tale. But there is much more that men experience rather than notice, and many of nature's lessons are learnt without being even conned. How much of nature is there that continually advances and recedes, shows itself and hides itself, promises and bids you look for the fulfilment, puts questions hard as enigmas and expects them to be answered. Here are the stars overhead, that even an artist, much less a philosopher, could never have sown so picturesquely. The highest arts cannot match chance or individuality. The outer world of the heavens above consists of two or three stars pre-eminent for lustre ; then of some dozens in groups, which it has cost some fancy work to liken to any known forms ; then of the multitude. The heavenly host is ever growing from thousands to millions and to millions of millions.

Only three hundred years since these stars were believed to be set in a solid arch, no doubt some in stupendous relief, with valleys and depths capacious enough for the most adventurous fancy to exercise itself upon. Either the old or the new astronomy is grand enough, and picturesque enough, to set the mind at work on the track of Divine purposes.

Of the flowers under our feet, some assiduously court sense and tenderly appeal to affection. Some enter the domestic circle and become historical. Of the animated creation some members are in touch with humanity, sharing man's duties, his burdens, and even his food and habitation. There is hardly a child's tale in which they have not a part. They supply a universal language. We seem to know what all the creatures would say if they had languages of their own. The greater number of creatures recede into minuteness, and almost into powerlessness. In a long perspective we see immediately before us the garniture of temples and festivities, and far away the atoms of colour that prove life to be everywhere, and to pass beyond discovery. It is a mighty creation that seems to palpitate before us, to heave its breast, and to announce by turns better acquaintance and chilling indifference. Is it a game? Is it a dance, like the tarantella or other performances of warmer climes? But all nature takes part in it. A meaning there must be, and it must be Divine.

XXIII

THE WORD IN MAN'S OWN MIND

I FEEL like those who have to run a race in a short course, and who have often to return to the goal they started from. That goal is the Word, or *Logos.* I cannot take for granted that my readers keep in mind everything I have been saying, even if it be ever so necessary. Indeed I am sure some will still be asking, 'What is this Word, which on the one hand is said to be with God, and of God, and in some way to be identified with Him; and, on the other hand, is described as in the hearts and minds of all men, in contact, and in converse, and in conflict with every form of evil? How, again, can we speak of the world's common stock of knowledge, opinions, and ideas, so far as they are right and good, as the Word, or *Logos*? Some of my readers may have heard the word Rationalising, and may suspect this to be simply an attempt to explain away a doctrine which we are to believe, whether we understand it or not.

But what I say to my readers is, 'Stir yourselves, lift up your hearts. Believe, and be thankful.' Assuredly all that is good is of God and is God; and His

Word, even if it comes to us in innumerable scattered echoes, is the Word of God. Unity, order, and law pervade the universe, which is animated by the same vital light and heat, and joined in one indissoluble bond of mutual attraction. All is One here in an infinite variety and distribution of parts. The same God does it all and is everywhere. He is as omnipresent and omnipotent in the heart and mind of man as in the material universe. It is true that man is but sparsely distributed over this earth, and in a variety of conditions unknown to any other part of creation. Like a spoilt child he has a will of his own and is very masterful. He is loath to recognise any superiority except his own over those whom he regards as his inferiors. He believes himself his own best adviser. Not only in this country, but all over the world, he feels his house his castle, and his own brain the citadel. Any counteracting, modifying, or directing influence he regards as treason in the camp. Beaten as he may find himself in the camp, in the forum, or in the senate, he finds no match for him when he is alone. There is no lion then in his way, no stumblingblock, no powers of evil. In this fancied freedom and security he is told that there is One who is a searcher of hearts, and who even knows his thoughts long before. There is so little in the facts of the case to bear out this note of alarm, and it is so contrary to all reason and all experience, that he will accept it only as a theological expression meaning something he knows nothing of. Warnings indeed are

always useful, and it is well to be safe. He will bear it in mind. Should he find himself in extraordinary danger or temptation, he can answer for it the caution has not been lost upon him. But he certainly is master of his own actions and guardian of his own honour. Should he say or do what is wrong, then the world and its Maker have a just quarrel with him, but till he errs in word or deed he is at liberty, on trial certainly, but quite free to choose. But as surely as the Almighty is in his earthly frame, carrying on all the physical work of life, and punishing excesses and misuses, so surely is the Word of God in his innermost soul, face to face with his very self, offering the good, and warring against the evil, raising and strengthening him, but allowing him to work his own ruin if so he will.

It is this intrusion into his cherished privacy that man will not believe, or only believe in an abstract way. All his passions, all his imagination, his frivolities, his vagaries, his jealousies, his hates, his loves, his resentments, his broodings, his wild theories, his monstrous calculations, whatever he can do, and still more what he cannot do—all have full play there in the inner court of his own temple, where in truth Self reigns supreme. Is God there? he asks. Is the Word of God heard there? Is a man's own self a house divided against itself, and has a stronger than he broken through the defences? Incredible. If true, true only in a sense that one need not trouble about.

Then for the collective mind of our common humanity, is it not free to form its own conclusions and enjoy its own delights? Here are the treasures accumulated by the common instincts of noble races. Here are the traditions of great states. Here is the public opinion of the educated masses. Here is the consent of philosophers, the charms of universal song, the rules of art, and the acknowledged triumphs of poets, painters, sculptors, and architects. What has any Word of God to do with all this, or this with the Word of God? It all exists in thought, feeling, memory, and in momentary emotions hardly to be classed or described.

But in truth all this is the Word of God, that is, so far as it is really good, really true, really wholesome, really reasonable. A very little serious thought will show the objections illusory. All this that I have enumerated strikes the mind, penetrates it, and forms it, much more than any mere material agencies, more indeed than Nature herself, in her most subtle forms. All this creation of the human intellect, as some will deem it, is independent of time and space; it has now flourished continuously for thousands of years, with ever-increasing vitality; it passes current from East to West, from the Arctic to the Antarctic circle; it comprises within one commonwealth hundreds of languages. It survives when races have passed away, when empires have left no other trace, and when the face of nature has been changed. We can easily

imagine it to survive, though the world itself had fallen to atoms and disappeared in a cloud of cosmic dust. What hinders that this should be the Word of God, to those at least who acknowledge that Word and wait for it?

The only answer given by the prevailing philosophy of our day is that the cultivated mind of man will not so demean itself, and so abnegate its lofty throne. Something, just for form's sake, it will resign to pious dreamers. The rule and management of brute matter, of solids, fluids, elements, and forces it is prepared to hand over to a Power, which people may call God if they please. But surely man—say our modern philosophers—has made for himself the domain of Thought, and need not fear any interference with his exclusive command and free enjoyment. So they say; but, in truth, Thought, as far as it is good and true, is the present Word of a present Almighty, and, if it be only true to itself, can name no lower Master.

XXIV

THE WORD THE SAME IN ALL AGES AND COUNTRIES

When spiritual ideas and impressions, and all that we call worship or ethics, are said to be the Word of God to those who will receive it, there will presently occur the question, how can that be one Word which is infinitely various, changing indeed with countries, epochs, races, languages, schools, cities, villages, occupations, and professions? We all see that a man's character is much affected by circumstances; that long custom and even fleeting fashion create many differences; that a standard may be applicable to one age and not to another; that a man may pardonably, and indeed almost innocently and virtuously, be a careless liver in one state of society when he would not escape just censure a hundred miles off, or a hundred years after. War has one code of morals, peace another. The sailor is a licensed libertine. Every profession has its code. Commerce and manufacture claim to stretch a few points. We allow to youth what we do not to age, and to age what we deny to youth. The standards of truth and even sacred

antiquity have been carefully and ingeniously investigated, with the assumption that there are real differences. Kings can do no wrong, as if what is wrong in others may be right in their case. 'That in a captain's but a choleric word which in a soldier is flat blasphemy.' It has been often said, and is not easy to dispute, that Genesis must be allowed a standard of its own. What, then, are we to say of that Word which speaks to all of these, and which has so spoken since the beginning of the world, and which is the author and giver of all the good gifts of virtue in this multitude, of which probably no one man is exactly like another?

For my own part, I think the differences have been much exaggerated, and that which is common lost sight of or designedly kept out of sight. The epic poets and dramatists of antiquity played upon the varieties of human character without stint or reserve, and certainly without any wish to save the reputation of their times. They exhibit every form of wickedness, outrage, revenge, pride, passion, treachery, and all the crimes that break up families and states, and cover dynasties with perpetual shame. But in one way or another there is always provided the moderator, the interpreter, and the corrector. Every sin entails its retribution. The domestic virtues are always in honour, and have free play. In every page we are reminded of the Divine Nemesis, the envy of Heaven, and the irony of fate. Indeed, the Divine

element is more conspicuous in ancient histories and biographies, even those we call profane, than in modern works of a like class.

There is one part of the old Greek play in which objectors might expect to find something in their favour. It is the chorus, or something between an ode and a short sermon, introduced between the acts of the play, and originally the substance of the play itself. It was sung, or intoned, generally with a dance or measured tread, and was supposed to express the sentiments or reflections proper to the occasion. The performers were sometimes of one class, sometimes another; sometimes real, sometimes imaginary. As the chorus had come down from a remote antiquity, and had fashioned itself to entirely different circumstances and manners, we are not to expect much consistency in it. But there is a general idea that it conveyed the moral sentiments and the religious opinions of the age. The charges against the chorus are that, as it suited the author and the actors, it was time-serving, obsequious, popularity hunting, and doing nothing to steady the political worship of an unsteady people. I have myself noticed that whenever it does seem to exceed itself, there is always an undercurrent of warning and rebuke, showing that the leaning of old Greek chorus is, upon the whole, much the same as that of a good English writer of the same class.

True there is much to be accounted for, much to be excused, or at least to be extenuated, in the records of

antiquity; but so there is in these days, when familiarity blunts our sense of much that we hold to be wrong, and discharges it quickly from the memory. If we could suppose any two ages, or two countries, summoned to a fair and enlightened tribunal, to stand a comparison of their pretensions to true goodness, and to choose their own pleaders and their own pleas, it would by some be found that the differences are more apparent than real, and that even a better gloss, or a more exact form, might only prove a greater hypocrisy. Manners and customs do little more than disguise the inward reality.

Upon what may be called the theological question, Pagan antiquity had a much deeper conviction of Divine presence and interference than we have, who think we know so much more. Amid all the prevailing confusion of beliefs, they held a moral unity. Indeed, they would say of the moral standard what they said of languages. On earth are spoken many languages, in heaven one. Everywhere and in all ages the family has been the first school. It is not only the oldest, but the most unchangeable of institutions. The relations of father, mother, brothers and sisters, son and daughter, have always been the same in the humbler and even the better classes, and are only altered for the worse by great power, great wealth, or extraordinary circumstances. Men usually are to the end of their lives what they have been to those about them in their early years. The ex-

ceptional cases call for investigation, but can be accounted for.

So I must protest against all notions of a precarious, local, temporal, fleeting, and occasional morality, as distinguished from that which is due to personal characteristics, or to extraordinary circumstances. The Almighty is the same. His Word is the same. Light is the same. Heat is the same. The laws of nature are the same. In every moral question, the last appeal has been to the order of nature and its requirements, and to such revelations of the Divine will as God may be supposed to have given to man. The more any such question is fairly argued, the more light there is thrown upon it, and the more a decision is received and considered in relation to its natural consequences, the more has man been brought home to one law, and one judgment-seat, as the court of final appeal. The very piety of mankind, familiarised and profaned into impiety, has made the good and the bad, the religious and the irreligious, indifferently appeal to the God whom, if they love not, yet they know to be Judge.

If we confine ourselves to the present century, and to the civilised world, there can be no pretence of different standards of virtue having any authority, any sanction, any validity even as an excuse. There can be nothing that can be set up for an hour against the one Word of God that has become flesh and dwelt among us. There have been many differences, great

differences, and widely prevailing differences. If I instance many I shall only be stirring up strife. I will be content with one. When I was born it was lawful—indeed, honourable—for a Liverpool merchant or shipowner to have partners on the west coast of Africa, who every now and then attacked a village in the interior, with which they had no quarrel whatever, massacred all who resisted, and many who were not worth bringing away, and then took the young, strong, and handsome, in ships where they were packed like pigs under deck, to the West Indies, and sold them to the sugar planters, to work under the lash for the brief remainder of their lives. Many great families in this country lived in overweening pride and ruinous extravagance on this traffic, and had the support and encouragement of a good many other like iniquities. The year after I was born the slave trade was declared unlawful by Act of Parliament. Slavery itself had a quarter of a century before been pronounced incompatible with British law on the soil of this island, and a quarter of a century after it was extinguished on all British possessions.

Here we see this century passing just condemnation on the last. Already the last half of this century has in many instances corrected the inhumanity of the first half, and it may now be safely predicated that the twentieth century will hold many a searching inquest into the ways and doings of this present century, and pronounce severe judgments upon it, possibly

mulcting heavily the representatives of the wrong-doers. Much of our modern legislation is in spite of better lights and repeated warning. It is recommended by present convenience, by the interest of parties, and by the self-complacent maxim that a man, or a class, or a people, or a generation, may do what it wills with its own. But the Word of God still prevails, and proves continually the strongest Power on the politics of the world

XXV

STANDARDS OF MORALITY

BUT is not Christianity itself a higher standard, a grander idea, and a holier life, than the very best estimate we can form of patriarchal goodness, Jewish goodness, Greek or Roman goodness, or any goodness other than Christian in our own times? If we could suppose any limitation or qualification of the Word of God, we could more easily answer that question, and indeed many people do answer it by maintaining that the Word of God in no way reaches those who are out of the covenant of grace.

I find myself unable to bind or limit the Word of God. When we say, as no doubt we do with full Scriptural warrant and good reason, that by or through the Son God made the world, we must include all that is in the hearts of all men, excepting the evil that is due to the ill exercise of free will. We must include all that is good, unless we would say that there exists good of which God is not the author. There are indeed divines who say that the apparent goodness of heathens or unbelievers is not true goodness, not goodness in its proper form, but, like

the goodness of an animal following its own simple instinct, for aught we see inevitably, and without a choice in the matter. I cannot think we are called on to pronounce such a judgment as that on the goodness of the whole human race out of Christ's Church. Nor can it be one Word to the chosen people, and another Word to the rest of the human race. Surely it must be one and the same Word that speaks, and has spoken to all nations since the beginning of the world.

What then becomes of the different degrees, standards, rules, fashions, or what not? All these are in the people themselves, in their own habits and their own wills, not in the Word of God. These differences are quite as great even in any small circle, even in any one family, as they are in the largest and widest comparisons that history or geography may suggest to us. Here, for example, are two members of one family, nursed at the same breast, taught to pray at the same knee, sharing the same laborious, costly, and self-denying kindness bestowed upon their maintenance, education, and outfit; and reading the same books, taught at the same school, and surrounded by the same associates. Are they alike? Are they duplicates? Are they just two coins with the same coinage and superscription—two bits of pottery cast in the same mould?

They never are. Sometimes they show such a contrariety as to suggest the outcome of continual contradiction and violent antagonism. The one will love

father and mother, the other will hate one or both of them. The one will be a bond of union in the family, the other a continual provocation to strife and disorder. The one will believe, the other disbelieve. The one will put a good construction wherever it can be put, the other an ill construction, as readily and generally. The one will be ever open, heart and mind, to the gracious movements and invitations of the Word of God, speaking to his soul; the other will obstinately harden his heart, close every aperture, and strain every muscle against the intrusion of any will but his own, or any law but that which he lays down for himself. It is not the Word of God that is different in these cases, it is the individual, and it is he alone who is answerable for the results. The exercise of free will under circumstances that might seem likely to control or neutralise its action is certainly a mysterious and unaccountable fact, but a fact it is, as we all know too well.

But there is that which is still more remarkable. There may be two persons who would strike others as very like, in character, in tastes, in avowed principles, and even in circumstances. They may not be conscious of any disagreement, and they may work together without collision. But they will form very different estimates of character, of duty, and of the rules to be observed in the selection of acquaintances. They may carry this so far, that one will cut all his relatives and quarrel with all his neighbours, while the other will be dutiful, friendly, and hospitable. It is

not out of the question that both may be right, indeed it is to be hoped that it is not necessary either should be wrong. The voice of conscience, the still small voice, may come to them differently, and this in a vast variety of circumstances under which a man must judge for himself, and nobody has a right to supersede his judgment and pronounce him wrong. It may not even depend on particulars, for if a man has a right to follow the dictates of his own conscience, and to interpret the Word as it reaches him, he has a right to his own peculiar estimates on moral questions and to peculiar rules of life. These belong to his personality.

Then to return once more to the stock objection that many practices once thought allowable, and with even the example of God's saints to show for them, are now forbidden. In all those cases it must be admitted that the Word of God is against those practices. The patriarchs were polygamists, but they paid the full penalty for it. 'The man after God's own heart' was a great offender, and some of his breaches of the original law are spoken of with scarcely a hint of reprobation. Yet he had to submit to the severest rebukes, and to endure the most terrible chastisements. His sins were visited on his family and his descendants, and he remains the greatest example of contrition and repentance, inasmuch that we confess our own sins in his words to this day.

Again, slavery was permitted to God's people, though they had themselves been delivered from

bondage by Divine interposition. But there never was the least doubt as to the dictates of nature—that is, the natural instinct and simplest conceptions of the human heart—that slavery, as well as polygamy and many other evil customs, was a departure and corruption, extenuated rather than justified by circumstances. The Word of God—that is, the still small voice of uncorrupted nature—was dead against these practices, and in all such cases the offenders themselves felt from the first, or were soon made to feel and to know, that the hand of God was raised against them to avenge the neglect of His Word. The law itself contained many provisions for the kind treatment of slaves as brethren, and for their manumission or redemption if they wished it.

I have observed that even in one family, under the same training, there will rise different examples and different standards. These are often so discordant as to result in serious contention. The father will have one standard, the mother another ; the sisters will have their ideal, the brothers theirs. In larger communities, in states, and even in homogeneous races, the differences of standard will be countless and immense. There are the several standards of the politician, the soldier, the merchant, the shopkeeper, the professional man, the clergyman, the country gentleman. They cannot help taking their own views on questions affecting their interests, and thinking very similar acts allowable in their own case very wrong in the case of

others. Everybody is disposed to criticise all the world, and everybody has the materials for that work. Of course we cannot say that the Word of God has divided itself into a thousand ramifications to meet the views of those distinct classes. No. The divergence is in themselves.

XXVI

LAW

ALL Law is of God and the Word of God; not only The Law, but every human law. The Law and the Prophets make up the greater part of the Bible, which, collectively and unreservedly, we call the Word of God. It is true that there are distinctions made between one aspect of that Word and another. The Law came by Moses, grace and truth by Jesus Christ. Again, the Jews are said to have received the Law by the disposition of angels, which, it appears, was a prevailing belief. But on whatever grounds anything is called the Word of God, they must include that which is His express will. All the ancient lawgivers and legislators obtained for their laws whatever religious sanction lay in their power, claiming for them sacred originals, giving them religious forms, and threatening Divine enforcement. Even unwise laws, unjust laws, illiberal laws, licentious laws, and cruel laws, have generally proceeded upon some principle of justice, or mercy, or equality, or prescription, and thereby left an opening for amendment. Indeed, all laws require continual adaptation to circumstances, for no written

law has yet been found to meet all cases. In our own country judges and lawyers frequently complain of statute law, but still more frequently deliver judgments and agree to verdicts that compel fresh statutory interference. They thus testify to the fact that law is a living thing. It is justly described as the perfection of reason. As a work of art, nothing is more beautiful than a sound judgment upon a mass of complicated transactions, in which perhaps both parties have quite lost their way in the attempt to recover their rights and dispossess the other side.

Law necessarily descends to small matters, to forms, to slight differences, to things of little value in themselves. But nature runs on small matters; society and social intercourse run on small matters; health runs on small matters; so do decency, honour, good looks, good music, and even good cookery. For a very small matter—saving an ark from falling over the cart-side—a well-intentioned man, as he no doubt thought himself, was struck dead. The truth is, we all require to be taught law, and trained in its exercise. For this is required a day of small things, and not a few such days, line upon line and precept upon precept. The man who says he is ready to obey the law, and enforce it too, in a great and important matter, may some day find himself taken at his word, and brought face to face with the majesty of law when he least expects it, and is unprepared for it. No one can help much in the making of

laws unless he have learnt the art by the constant observance of law. In that way only can he know its difficulties, and where justice may be enforced or mercy admitted.

It ought to be a sensible pleasure to have to comply with an unexpected rule or regulation, for we are thereby brought into the very presence of the great Lawgiver. The poor simpletons—women chiefly—who seek to cheat the Customs or some other department of the State by some bit of smuggling or other trickery, must be strangely wanting in the sense of the Divine omnipresence and omniscience—indeed of all the relations between God and man. The many stages and barriers of ceremony that surround a royal or other great personage are but so many steps leading to One above all, and need not be trodden with weariness or vexation of spirit. The Word of God is often described as giving wings to the soul, but the soul has to climb before it can fly, and though it may count the steps it must leave none untrod. It has to fulfil law, not to forget it, or ride roughly over it or through it, as 'in a carriage and four,' for every jot and tittle of it will have to be fulfilled in one way or another.

But is this true of all law—of the laws of savages, and of the worse than savages, the semi-barbarous, semi-civilised, who obey neither nature nor any higher law, as, for example, the Mormonites, with their many wives, and the Hindoos, with their infant wives? Such

customs are not laws. They are organised revolts against nature. They are diseases, where their very presence is not wholly without benefit, for they would not exist but for the general weakness of moral condition. The coward conscience of the community paralyses the hand it would put forth to restrain them. The Word of God speaks through them in warning. There always remains the beam which the law-makers have first to cast out of their own eyes.

XXVII

THE WORD ALWAYS AND EVERYWHERE

It may easily occur to some of my readers that the 'Word of God,' which I profess to be bringing to their notice, ought to have a more solemn and more special treatment than I am giving. The Bible, the Church, and the Ministry, and certain spots of the earth are holy, or sacred, and we do not speak of them without recognising their sanctity. We draw lines of distinction, and even separation, between these and common matters. So it will be expected that I should treat the 'Word' more as a subject of theology, or of worship, or of devout meditation.

I must therefore remind my readers that the Word is with God, and of God, and, in a sense, is God. So wherever God is there the Word is. The Word is coming from Him at all times, and in ways more than we can conceive. No human wickedness, folly, or blasphemy can drive the Almighty and His Word from an inch of His ground, to use a common expression. He is in the thick of the riot, in the midnight brawl, in the wildest drunken orgy, in the conspiracy and the assassination, in the secret conclave of

philosophers, and in the inner circle of literary sages banded together to dethrone Him from His kingdom, His power, and His glory, and shut the doors of the universe in His face. In the Scriptures the Almighty is often represented as the God of Battles, fighting for and with His servants, while this service, instead of being that smooth, easy, uniform life which most people prefer, is described as a scene of confusion, clamour, and dust, in which they are too dinned to catch the word of command and too blinded to see the commanding officer clearly.

It is sometimes said that a hero is not a hero in the eyes of his valet; and there are people who tell us that if we want to disenchant ourselves of the nature of our supposed Almighty, we cannot do better than read the Bible carefully through. What these people themselves think God ought to be, if He exists, and will show Himself, they know best; but they seem to look for a pompous personage, who will only appear on state occasions, in the halls and parade-ground of his palaces, and then in such majesty as to crush the masses into instant submission. I have taken for granted that my readers have accepted the God of the Bible, who is present everywhere, and whose Word has gone out to all nations and to the ends of the earth, and who is the Creator and Upholder of all things. Wherever God is there His Word is. It is impossible to do anything, or to say anything, that does not in some degree point to Him, and there-

fore do the office of the Word, from God and to Him. We cannot even think the most secret thought or the most trivial thought without a like bearing, for the least reflection on what we are saying or doing has an instant tendency to grow into more and more.

It is impossible for a man to say or think that there is not a God without forming some conception of a God, and looking for some principle on which to ground the denial. Even supposing that a man, by obstinate insistance on critical objections, had succeeded at last in getting rid of the whole Bible, and could honestly, as he imagines, throw it into his waste-paper basket, he would have to explode the idea of God if he would get rid of the Word of God, for that Word would certainly search him, knocking at the door of his heart, and driving him to choose between further hardening and relenting. It is not easy to see the sun without a momentary thought on the Sun of Righteousness, and certainly darkness is not the time in which a man most easily dispels uncertain hopes, undecided plans, and anxious forebodings.

XXVIII

IDEAS

I AM writing not only for those who may know a little of ancient philosophy, but still more for those who know nothing of it. Some of them will say, 'Why trouble us with philosophy? Better leave it alone.' That I hold to be impossible in these days. The whole world is philosophising—is 'thinking,' as it is pleased to call it. The Creeds of the Church contain philosophical expressions. As I have stated at some length earlier in this volume, St. John, in a summary but solemn way, accepts the best he found as the philosophy of his day. He endorses it, to use a mercantile term, giving to it its truest, highest, most Divine, and at the same time most human significance. Some Christian writers are much offended at the notion of St. John, who enjoyed the special confidence of our Lord and special revelation, nevertheless being indebted to heathens for the most important word in his theology. But under God's guidance His people did borrow from the heathen in all ages and in many ways; and though they at last were rather lenders than borrowers, yet they had to

borrow a little before they could lend much. No one knew better than St. John who was the Word, and what the Word was, but it is from him that the Church has learnt to apply the title of *Logos*, or the Word, to our Lord and Saviour. I have said much on the meaning of this title, and shall have to say more. For the present I take it in its relation to what are called ideas. It is a term with which you are better acquainted than you are with *Logos*, the Word; and if you give me your attention you will the better understand the Word by thinking over what you already understand by ideas.

When Greek philosophy was a living thing, taught and discussed everywhere, even in what we should call elementary schools, together with the study of the *Logos* there always went the study of ideas. *Logos* was called the chief of ideas, the idea of ideas, *the* idea pre-eminently, the centre, the secret, the conclusion, the key of all ideas. Ideas were innumerable and infinitely various; by themselves they were without order and relation. They were antagonistic—that is, at war with one another. But order is Heaven's first law—that is, God's first law, and all ideas had to be harmonised and combined—that is, in the *Logos*.

Since I wrote these words a kind friend has lent me a book written by a very interesting Oxford man, containing the life of a great Oxford man. Therein it is mentioned quite by the way that there was once a controversy between a grammarian and a Spanish

university. The former had laid down, as sharply and roughly as schoolmasters are apt to express themselves, that such an expression as 'vanity of vanities' means the greatest of vanities—that is, a vanity, a folly, or a nothingness exceeding any other nothingness. I can only guess what the Spanish university had to say to this, but I think it must have been that the expression meant more than a comparison, more than a superlative. Indeed, it is scarcely possible to compare follies, or pursuits, or pleasures, or virtues that run in different lines. A man restricted by circumstances to one or two pursuits, and disappointed, or out of heart, might conclude that he had been unfortunate in his choice, and that he might have found happiness in some matter more within his competence or to his taste. But in King Solomon, the assumed author of this expression, we have an instance of wide sympathies, versatile genius, and unlimited means, imparting to disappointment a higher significance.

The form of speech, however applied, must mean a certain unity and completeness towards which all the rest are tending. The life, the main idea, the personality is in the whole, from which indeed the several parts have originally derived themselves. So I take it that the 'idea of ideas' means much more than the grandest idea that there ever was in creation, or in the heart of man, or in all history, tale, or song. It means the idea, which in this case must be the

reality, the life, which comprises all the ideas of greatness and goodness that man has any conception of, and which alone can give them a really personal character, wanting which they are but parts, echoes, and reflections.

It seems strange that while *Logos* has never gained admission into our language, at least into familiar use, unless it be in a very few exceptional instances, 'idea' has become one of the commonest words in our language. Everybody knows what is meant by an idea—at least everybody will be prepared to say what he means by it. The word has become even a familiar exclamation of surprise, disagreement, or indignation. 'The idea!' means that the very thought is intolerable. Then we use the word 'ideal,' as I shall have to notice presently. Thus *Logos*, which to us Christians is far more important, has been protected from familiar use by its sacred character, while 'idea,' which is equally a Greek word, and forms the foundation of the old philosophy, has become almost as common as any other word of our language.

We use the word 'idea' in a wider and less distinct sense than the Greeks did, and no longer in a philosophical or theological sense. I think it devolves on me to state, as well as I can, what that sense was. These ancient philosophers supposed that the ideas, or forms, or notions of all things to be created had existed, and do exist, from all eternity in the Almighty

mind, not merely as thoughts or intentions, but as living things, and constituting on the whole that *Logos* which brings us into intelligent and actual relation with the Almighty.

The creation is full of problems—riddles, as many call them—and this was the solution offered—perhaps I should say accepted—by one of the best thinkers the world ever saw. It really cannot be called at once unreasonable. I have often heard working-men, and their employers too, say that you must see your work before you—that is, you must have the idea in your head. So it is a just conclusion from our own experience that the Almighty, before the creation of this world, saw the work before Him. I know that in almost any London club or philosophical society, if you spoke of the Almighty having ideas, you would be laughed down, shouted down, for a fool. Where are these ideas? it would be said. What place in the universe, in all space, can be found for them? We have no call to answer these questions, nor have we any occasion to inquire too curiously into the nature and constitution of the Almighty. We need not go out of this world.

These ideas I have just said were living things, with vital powers and vital action, forming themselves into groups and systems, and constituting both the Deity and His work. To the Christian mind—at least to the Christian of these days—the notion of a composite or constitutional God, made up of distinct and

vital entities, may seem strange, derogatory, and even blasphemous. It was not so to the pious and philosophical heathen mind. It utterly abhorred the notion of a perfectly simple God, utterly immaterial, utterly without form and void, and who at any stage or time of His existence could be supposed to have no society, and to be doing nothing, either because He could not or would not do anything.

In the first place there is good reason to believe that Plato did not himself invent or imagine these eternal, Divine, living, and lifegiving ideas. He found in Egypt, what we find there in its temples and tombs to this day, that the Egyptians, from a very early time, had a god for every kind of living creature, that god being the living idea of the kind. Some one says they had 90,000 gods. Each one of these divine types was supposed to have powers and functions for the creation, preservation, and government of the species it represented. Among other powers it was independent of space, and indeed, it is evident, of time also, as the god of kine, for example, had all the cattle of the world in his keeping. Such a notion may be unnecessary, but it is not ridiculous, and is not beyond our conceptions of Almighty power.

To confine ourselves to this world and to the human mind, we all have notions or ideas of these creatures quite independent of the particular examples within our own knowledge. We even bestow immense labour and cost in breeding, crossing, and

training useful and domestic animals up to certain forms and ideals. Nay, it is frequently boasted that we can and do make various animals just what we wish them to be. A like presumption is often rashly and injuriously entertained by young parents, who start early with certain ideas of what they would like their children to be. No sooner do they see the little bit of life before them, than they speculate and determine what form it shall develop into. The chances are against them, for the probability is that the child will share the natures of the two parents, and that one of them will preponderate in the selection and enforcement of the idea it means to carry out. Of course the moral is that all human ideas ought to be held subordinate to the Divine. The fact that every child has a special facility for the reception of certain tastes or ideas, and for their development, gives a special responsibility to those who have the care of it. They have to suit the child's tastes as well as their own, and to lose no time in finding out what it requires. Months count for years in infancy, as many find to their pleasure or to their pain and cost.

Most men, indeed all men, are proud to believe they can imagine better persons or things than they chance to have about them in their own little world. They are quite sure they can imagine better men and better women, better laws, better rulers, a better reign of the elements and order of the seasons, better schools and universities, and even better rules

of society and domestic life than their own. Nor can it be said that these ideas are generalisations or conveyed in pictures by the pencil or the pen. Very defined and very fixed ideas are quite compatible with an entire absence of literature, not to say civilisation and even society. Even birds, beasts, and fishes have ideas, constituting tastes, by which they can distinguish friend from foe at the very first encounter. It is well known that any house-dog can distinguish between a gentleman and a tramp, and most dogs have a standing quarrel with the postman, whoever he be. A horse will make up his mind to shy at a wheelbarrow or a curiously cut yew-tree, and will shy accordingly, though neither of them has ever moved an inch or shown the least sign of animosity. A young snake will snap at the stick that has just broken its egg and introduced it to the outer world. Ideas are all the reason that shoals of sprats can possess when they throw themselves by myriads on the rocks to escape the ravenous bass. Virgil says a horse will bolt the instant the known odour of the tiger reaches his nostrils, but that odour could not have been a matter of experience at the first meeting, and whatever the odour, certainly the first sight of a tiger would render any horse quite unmanageable.

But in whatever way the ideas may be supposed to have come, whether by inheritance or by experience or by imitation, the actual possession of ideas

is enough for the present purposes. Why is the Almighty to be denied that which the human and the brute creation undoubtedly have? Nay more, how can it be denied that the Divine intelligence, comprehending, as it does, all inferior intelligences, has these ideas? Nay, more. These ideas which are in us could not be there without God giving us the power to conceive them and to cherish them. It is we in Him and He in us that has these ideas. If it be certain, as every Christian is bound to believe, that God created the ideas, it is not less certain—indeed necessarily follows—that God also gave us, and still gives, the power of apprehending them and exercising the judgment and the affections upon them.

XXIX

VITALITY OF IDEAS

NOW what are these ideas? Many answers will present themselves, and these answers will be good as far as they go. Ideas, it may be said, are the impressions of things left on our memory, or the representations of them in our minds. They are the furniture of our brain; the stock of our intellectual property; the garniture of our inner temples; the books in our mental library; the pictures in our galleries. Even if this were all, it would be worth our while to give some thought to the selection of these pictures, to their careful preservation, and to the cultivation of a good taste. If there were losses and gains in the matter, and it were exposed to vicissitudes, then it would be advisable to take stock of our mental possessions every now and then, and perhaps to weed them occasionally. Everybody ought to know what he is worth, or otherwise he may find himself committed to great enterprises beyond his available means. There have been very sad cases of great personages—indeed great families—obliged to sell everything they have for what it would fetch, because they have failed to

keep accounts, unless indeed they have done worse, and wrecked their fortunes with their eyes wide open.

But these ideas are not mere pictures and statues ; they are not mere furniture ; they are not dead stock, or even live stock in the sense of being disposable, marketable, exchangeable, and exactly appreciable. They are part of ourselves. We have made them by the power which the Almighty has given us ; and they, in return, make us. They enter the mind at every opening ; they fix themselves and take root and grow, and they propagate as freely as the minute creatures which the microscope brings to light. Most ideas have very strong constitutions and very long lives, lasting indeed as long as ourselves. Who indeed can say how long after our present term of existence? They bring forth fruit, good or ill. They nourish, they invigorate, they quicken, they poison, they destroy. Whatever physical agencies can do with the body ideas do with the mind—that is, with our whole spiritual nature. Anybody engaged in any useful industry, such as agriculture, knows how difficult it is to deal with life—to foster profitable life, to keep down injurious life. But the old Roman poet says that even if you select the good seed grain by grain, the crop may be a doomed failure, and no human care can keep out the ubiquitous and many-shaped mischief.

Whether people are in company or in solitude, whether they are busy or idle, whether they are happy after their fashion or brooding over some mishap or

wrong, they are still inviting, admitting, and cherishing ideas, often to enormous proportions. The whole manner of life and social state may seem utterly unideal, and not appreciably higher than that of the beast that perisheth, but it is just in that darksome, dull, and seemingly lifeless state that ideas come up, no one knows how, and grow with mushroom thickness and rapidity. The more ideas a man is possessed of, the less will he note and survey and discriminate. His own self is smothered and lost in the crowd of his belongings. He finds himself, or rather would, should he ever seriously look for himself, a mere lumber room, or worse, a house evilly occupied and evilly used ; a castle weak against the foe, and strong only against Him that it should hail as its rightful Lord and Master. All have their ideas, but what rubbish, what follies, what toys, what mimicries, what impieties, what idols of the disordered and unhealthy imagination make up the mass of these ideas—yes, of that mental stock which, as far as we can see, we shall carry away with us when houses, lands, money, and friends will have to be left behind !

People resent the thought of bondage even when they hug their chains. They do not like to be told that they are slaves ; that they live within the four walls of a cell, and are at the mercy of a gaoler. Even if they like their own ideas, they flatter themselves they are still free to retain or discard them. They regard them as lifeless furniture that can any day be packed up in a removal van, and sent out of the way to be re-

placed by a better stock, more serviceable or more in fashion. So a word more as to the life, and consequent reality, of ideas. Is it not within everybody's own knowledge that ideas live and grow and act upon one another, and form character? If they are good and healthy ought they not to do so? Even were they only pictures, even were they images, even were they so many Dutch toys, they may still live and have the effects of life, or be dead, and so good for nothing. We do, in fact, see thousands of pictures that have no effect upon us because they are dead—dead to us at least.

Let me attempt to illustrate the difference between a live and a dead picture. Whether with the brush, the chisel, or the pen, a man may describe exactly, indeed with painful accuracy, a landscape, an animal, or a human being—perhaps a group. His friends may admire his work, seeing him do it, and themselves supplying what it wants. The public, perhaps the terrible Committee of the Royal Academy, within as much time as suffices to pass the work quickly before their eyes, reject and forget it. They see at a glance there is no life in it, no expression, no relation to the living world, no descent from a glorious past, no promise of a golden future. It is already fixed in its final stage, and is no more. It is stillborn.

But it is not everybody who has to deal with Academy pictures or an Academy board of selection. So I will take what, to some of my readers, may be a

more familiar illustration. A seed-merchant—that is, a man who supplies seeds to farmers and market-gardeners and gentlemen wishing to be useful—has to keep a large stock in hand, including many seeds for which the demand is irregular. Now some seeds will retain their vitality many years, others only a year or two. In the latter case the seed-merchant cannot be sure that his old stock is still capable of germination and growth. He cannot even be sure that it had life in it when it came into his hands, and cannot ascertain except by tests not easy and not infallible. But if he supplied a customer with a bushel of it, and it turned out to be good for nothing, he would find his customer going elsewhere. So what does he but mix the old seed with the new, and advise his customer to sow thick. If then all the old seed simply perish, the failure will not be discovered, or at least will never be ascertained. Of course, too, the seed-merchant will be the safer if the seed to be sown consist of various selected sorts, as when land is to be newly laid down in grass. Such a field so used, or so misused, is indeed the best type of a mind thickly sown with ideas, some coarse, strong, and lively, certain to burst into life, run to seed, and multiply, while the choicer kind may be mere husks and outsides, that will not even live to die.

XXX

THE IDEA OF IDEAS

I HAVE quoted above some of the expressions applied to the Word—*Logos*—by the old philosophers. It was the chief of ideas, the idea of ideas, the centre, the secret, the key of all ideas. Ideas were described as making up the *Logos*. Now there is no character in all history, or fiction, so broad, so sympathetic, so multiform, so much the perfection of all true nature, all proper feeling, and all real duty, as our Lord's. Without any ostentation or appearance of effort, He is the good Son of the good Father, the good brother, the good sister, the good master, the good servant, the good householder, the good shepherd, the good citizen, the good subject, the good child, the good playmate, the good neighbour, the wise warrior, the prudent builder, and the judicious merchant, thus imparting into all these relations a dignity, a sweetness, and a mutual bearing, such as we could not find in any other narrative. That all these have become living ideas our own hearts must testify, as too that they form a living whole, a Divine personality, in our Lord.

There have been preachers who contended that we ought not to ascribe character to our Lord, inasmuch as He, being God, is the source of all moral excellence. They tell us we cannot even call Him good, inasmuch as He is goodness itself. I think this is refining rather too much, for our Lord Himself, when He declares that none are good except the Father only, does thereby call Him good. Perhaps these writers are only expressing their sense of the irreverence there certainly is in supposing that we can take an accurate measure and form a full estimate of the Divine nature. No doubt there are very great difficulties in the way of saying what God Almighty is, and what He is not. This is confessed in the Creeds of the Church, which declare what God has done, and what Christ has done, and what the Spirit has done, but do not attempt to characterise Them, except by saying what They are not—that is, They are not finite, They are not measurable. In like manner the old heathens shrank from the attempt to describe the Deity—that is, the true, original, eternal, infinite God. They could form no idea of Him. Any idea we can form of Almighty God must be as if a man conceived the thought that he could spring up to the stars, and after the utmost straining of his limbs found himself immediately on earth again.

But we cannot doubt God's power and will to do whatever will be good for us, and whatever will further

the good work He has begun for us ; and so we cannot doubt that the same Word by which all things were created has reached and still reaches the hearts and understandings of all the creatures framed to receive it. The character of God is revealed to us in Him whom we can call His Only Son. So, notwithstanding the objections I have alluded to, I must conclude that we may say of God and of His Son Jesus Christ whatever we may say of a good father, good son, good brother, and so forth.

More than that, I must conclude that, with our utter incapacity for knowing God as He is, our only possible way is to know His Son, who, in His discourses, and parables, and replies, in word, and still more in deed, has given us such an account of Himself as is not to be found in any history or biography. Though the narrative in the Gospels is confined to a very few years, to a very small country, and to a very narrow companionship, it contains more ideas of a sort to engage the heart and mind of man than any other book that could be named. These ideas are such as are communicable to all races, to the highest civilisation, and to the simplest, indeed rudest, classes and conditions ; to rich and poor, to old and young, to men, women, and children, to princes and peoples, bringing back all nations into one family, as much one family as that which we read of in the story of the creation, of the second peopling of the world, and of the patriarchal wanderings. No book can

furnish so many subjects for pictures, or so many topics and suggestions for moral improvement, as the Bible. These are its ideas. They are animated by one Spirit. They constitute one whole. In them we see what the Christian philosophers meant when they said that the Word—that is, Jesus Christ—was the Idea of ideas.

The one universal failure of man, and of all his works, is disproportion. Every excellence is only at the cost of something wanting. If the human race were as deformed physically as they are spiritually, we should hardly bear the sight. A man cannot be very strong, or very clever, or very eloquent, or very tender-hearted, or even very good, without one-sidedness. All recognise it, even though they may excuse it or bring it to the light, as they are friends or foes.

The world at large sees no such inequality of presentment in the character of Jesus Christ. Ingenious men have tried to make out that He was a partisan, or a pretender, or an Essene, or politically opposed to the Herods, and tempted to profit by their unpopularity. But very few can be persuaded out of their first notion of Jesus Christ—too simple for criticism, too great for comparison, too awful for dissection, too strong not to be feared, too beautiful not to be loved. Different Churches may indeed somewhat differ in their ideal, but it is everywhere a whole, and comprises all that can be comprehended of the Divine perfections.

Of course there is the old stock objection. Experience, it is alleged, warrants no such thing as moral perfection. If it exists in the world it is not discernible ; and if not discernible, we have nothing to do with it, and it is a delusion. Character itself is known by its differences and its peculiarities. What difference, what peculiarity, is there in the Almighty? In matter of fact, people are continually imagining, or trying to imagine, perfect characters ; and, what is more, believing the perfection realised in individual men and women. If they are disappointed, it is that they may look higher.

XXXI

IDEAS MATTERS OF FAITH AND OF FACT

THE ideas we ascribe to the Almighty and the Word are matters of faith. The ideas entertained by a man, a generation, or a people, are matters of fact, easily ascertainable, indeed often avowed. They admit of much sifting, deduction, and excuse. If, as we are bound, we look up to God as the author of all truth and the giver of every good gift, we must think so much the less of all human authority. We swear by no man, we call no man master, for One is our Master. This is pre-eminently the case as regards the Prince of Philosophers, who really seems to have expected it and intended it. So as he won attention to some leading ideas, and got a name for all time, it mattered not what revolutionary, indeed impossible, schemes of social regeneration he gravely propounded. When told they would not stand for a day, his only answer was that citizens were to be educated for them, and made to do their duty in them, and that then they would stand. If citizens were duly devoted to the work, and if they kept their eyes fixed long enough on the Source of all good from whom they had derived the better part of their own composite

nature, they would then be able to carry out the proposed plan for breeding perfect citizens, soldiers, and legislators, and creating a perfect state, indeed an irresistible and impregnable state.

To a Christian taste the proposed reconstitution of society in Plato's Republic is more than ludicrous, it is shocking. It seems to indicate that, with all his fascinating qualities, he wanted common sensibility on some most important points. But schemes of this sort were the order of the day, and while the older states were the outcome of nature, and founded on the laws of nature, the new constitutions set them at defiance. The condition of society throughout the whole Mediterranean, and the corresponding code of morals, was that which soldiers and sailors find and make wherever they go even in our own times. Plato justly censured the wild ways of Homer's gods and men, but his own taste was so blunted by use, that he saw no ill in far greater breaches of moral propriety for what may be called state purposes. It showed, too, simple ignorance of human nature to suppose that men so educated, indeed so born and bred, would be in any respects better than other men not so fantastically treated. But, as we have to take into account the miserable state of physical science, especially of astronomy, in those days, so have we also to remember that it is exceedingly hard for a man to rise above the level of his generation in dealing with social morality. Plato professed to look up to the All-wise and All-good, enthroned

above the heavens themselves, and giving even the sun the power to run his course, and he might have discriminated between his own wild fancies and the promptings of Infallible Truth. It is certain he did not, and it seems equally certain that this enhanced rather than detracted from his immense and long-enduring popularity.

What order of beings the proposed military system was meant to create, it is hard to say, for it had no husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters in our senses of the words. It was designed to establish new relations, more calculated to convert men—indeed, women too—into heroes, animated by irresistible courage and patriotism, and finding in their country's good an ample consolation for the absence of true conjugal happiness. In this sense men and women were to be saints and angels in their country's cause, and Plato seems to have thought that the soft contagion of such heroic manners would spread till all the world had adopted the larger basis of domestic life. Was he serious? It seems more likely that this was only a paradox, to draw attention to the great declension of morals and degeneracy of the human race, which even then was a common topic. The great name of Plato has not commended it to a single state in the old or the new world, for even Mormonism stops short of it.

The truth is Plato had to be a legislator as well as a philosopher, and the requirements of legislation

in his days were many, great, and unscrupulous. Every state depended on the number of first-rate fighting men it could turn out at short notice. These were living ironclads, armed with weapons of power and precision, able to transport themselves, supply themselves, and endure any amount of privation. Such articles were not easy either to breed or to hire. They were not the chance produce of citizens, artisans, or even of husbandmen. The only way Plato could think of was that followed in breeding horses and cattle—a proper selection of sires and dams, with corresponding arrangements. He had to take the world as he found it, and it was out of a large floating population, bound by few political or social trammels, that the soldier and the sailor came in those days. But mercenaries, besides being costly, are not very reliable, and Plato wished to secure a good home supply, who should be citizens as well as soldiers.

What we are concerned with in Plato's philosophy is the sublime truth that all spiritual existence is as much the work of God, and as much in His prevision and under His government, as matter and force. In the Almighty mind there exists everything, nay, we may indeed say, every human being, as he should be, and his work as it should be done; and this pattern is continually suggested to our consciences, so as to leave us without excuse. The Christian has to prepare for the inevitable crisis, and ascertain beforehand what is the Word, that is, the Divine ideal of the choice to be made and the work to be done.

XXXII

THE REAL AND IDEAL IN DOMESTIC LIFE

ONE order of 'ideas' is incomparably higher than any ideas of inanimate or animal existence, and has a necessary place in all human action under all circumstances. These are the moral ideas, as we call them, comprising all the forms of good and of evil. They are the staple and subject of history, of poetry, and of fiction, of much painting and sculpture, of most controversy and conversation, of all political and social life. The Greeks divided men into classes and characters with a keenness of observation, an acuteness, and a merciless distinctness in comparison with which modern caricature is coarse and feeble. They made the men stand out from the text as clear as the statue from the marble block. For every virtue Aristotle had an ideal, which he claimed to be the golden medium, or the true idea, and described all the possible excesses and shortcomings. Every fair reader of his 'Ethics' must admit that it would require a very good and wise man—indeed, a true Christian—in these days to escape his censure. It has often been observed that his description of true

friendship could not possibly be fulfilled in his days, scarcely even now, except in the highest, purest, and most sacred form of domestic life, which was almost a hopeless impossibility in that philosopher's own time.

The family and the community furnish the chief ideas of Christian philosophy. These ideas are the currency of common thought and action; they impart body and colour to the working of our minds and the aspirations of our souls. We all have our notion of the good father, the fond mother, the warm brother, the loving sister, the dear son, the sweet daughter, the kind relative, the revered ancestors, the citizen, the patriot, the statesman, the saintly priest, and the paternal king. Every cause with the least life in it rests on some idea of man as he ought to be, and as he would be, in the opinion of the advocate, but for abuses, or revolutions, or bad laws. The cottager as he should be, the farmer as he should be, the peasant as he should be, the workman as he should be, the old and the young as they should be, even the woman as she should be, are only some of the ideas that recent controversy has emblazoned on successive banners.

One thing, however, is common to all such ideas, and this is, that they are never found fully realised or exhibited in actual life. Such a universal failure may seem likely enough in purely human institutions, and in the working of laws made by parliaments; but it is the same with the great laws of Nature, and the

most universal and necessary relationships. It is, indeed, tender ground and a weary work to prove to Nature herself that she fails of her duty, and always misses the mark. But truth obliges.

Where is the father who is both real and ideal in the estimates of those who are most concerned—the children themselves? The father is regarded first as the instrument of discipline, then as the hard master and niggard economist; he is an incumbrance, burdening the ground too long and stopping the way. It was the jest of a noble humourist that the House of Lords itself showed how much easier it was to survive fathers than fortunes. I have heard people, not very mature, perhaps, in either years or wisdom, aver that they could not feel under any obligation to their fathers; the father might or might not wish to have children; anyhow, he had no wish or feeling at all about the child in question, for he knew nothing at all about it—not even whether it would be a boy or a girl, or with all its senses or all its limbs. Most people have some quarrel or other with their fathers, generally with some reason. The father has spent his money foolishly, instead of keeping it for his children, or he has quarrelled with his neighbour, or he has taken the wrong side in politics, or gone too much into the world or too little, or consulted his own comfort and convenience or caprice without seeming to care for those who were to come after. I have found sons remember a single harsh ex-

pression or unpleasant innuendo more than anything else a father said or did, even though they could not deny the father had devoted a long and laborious life to meet the wants of a family. In such cases the idea of a good father is only retained as a pattern whereby to try the supposed demerits of the actual father. The ideal father is, of course, that which is found in serious and well-intentioned books, or in talk when it happens to be sentimental or affectionate.

The mother starts fairer—that is, with warmer and softer associations. But whether she does her duty or does not, and whether she has failings or not, she is equally liable to forfeit the affection or the respect of her children. She may be ambitious, and her children may not share that virtue or that infirmity. She may be exclusive or shy, and her children may find themselves the chief victims of her perverse isolation. She may be a fanatic or a bigot, and so supply a caution to her own children against hard and fast lines. She may have over-estimated the claims of a mother to the family estate, and find she has more land or money and less love. She may live too long. More than all, worse than all—worse than all put together, yet more common than all—she may have what is called the mother's darling, the one absorbent, the Charybdis of her fortunes and of her earthly affections. This need not be always the first-born, though the natural transport on the occasion of a man being born into the world is most frequently

the first step in the long road of continual indulgence and consequent disaster.

The natural relations of the mother to the child are generally much briefer and more circumscribed than those of the father. From the day the son enters public life, even in its earliest stage, at the school, the mother has less and less to do with him, and he grows, so to speak, towards the father. If she tries to prolong her reign, it is apt to be in a woman's direction. She likes the fine fellow who makes a figure in society, and immediately improves, so she thinks, her own position in it. She wants the young and ready knight to dash at once into the strife of many tongues, to display her colours, to play her own little games, to bring her the last gossip and to deal her judgments abroad. In all ages and all dispensations the appearance of mothers in the scene of public life has generally gone some way to justify the ungallant Greek maxim that woman should be neither seen nor heard.

Only one idea of perfect womanhood has possessed the human mind, and that has come, one may say, straight from heaven. It is a Divine type. It proves eminently that it is not the real, it is the ideal, that dominates over the heart and understanding. We find the same when we come down to the relations of equality. Brotherhood is a beautiful idea, especially when it is applied to fellow-countrymen, fellow-creatures, and fellow-Christians. But, from

first to last, brothers are in competition with one another, mitigated by small steps of seniority or by diversities of natural bent. There are brothers who usurp and rob as if by right, without breaking the peace, and brothers who submit, yet with plaint and grievance. A very few years widen differences, for which parents are, perhaps, somewhat to blame. Brothers less and less understand one another as they acquire the thoughts and language of various schools. A time arrives when vulgar jealousies and base envyings invade what was once the charmed circle, and brothers become rivals in the open arena of life. All this sometimes melts and disappears before death has closed the record, or, at least, soon after. The idea of brotherhood survives, is beautiful and indestructible. The actual relations of sisters are more transient and evanescent. They are affected by wider separations, and often by greater inequalities; but ideal sisterhood is even less earthly and more heavenly than ideal brotherhood. Women we easily imagine as angels—very seldom men. But we are inconsistent in this matter, for we do speak of angels as we speak of men, though it is to women we give the name.

It is plain from all these varieties of domestic affection, from these excesses and these defects, that domestic relations have to be studied and regarded as a whole. From the cradle, from the altar, the sense of relation and due proportion has to be

borne in mind. No one object, no one idea is to be allowed overgrowth. The perfect man must be retained in all the hopes and all schemes naturally suggested and fostered by the possession of children and by the paradise of infancy. What are these young souls to be to their parents, to one another, to all around them? Can the question stop short there? Can unlimited expectation end in a final fulfilment or in final disappointment? It is not allowable to contend for the happy reunion and eternal association of the family; but it cannot be denied that the idea of domestic life, so deeply implanted and often so cultivated by a due following up, must have a permanent place in God's dealings with man. But this is tantamount to saying that there must be God and there must be man. Anticipation—that is, duly exercised and purified reason—cannot stop there. There must be that which is God and man.

XXXIII

IDEAS OF THE FAMILY

UNDER the last heading I have dwelt at some length on the change of the filial sentiment from the real to the ideal form, and, in a passing way, on the like change in the relations of brother and sister. Already I feel I may have suggested the question, What have these to do with the Word, viz. that which mediates between God and man? Our Lord several times declares that the domestic affections may, and under some circumstances must, undergo such a change of form that it may be said the real object is gone; the spiritual feeling remains, and is merged in a higher and larger relation. The Divine call, in the ordinary course of duty, may involve the loss of all that is called domestic, or even private. That is by no means uncommon, even when there is no great name or lofty vocation in the matter. In some states of society, as, for example, that described in the Bible and in the Iliad, the woman might be called on any day to forget her father's house and her country, and enter an entirely new stage of existence in a new house under a lord and master speaking another language, and not serving

her gods. All that may be shocking to us, and we may think we have parted company with these usages long ago; but at present we are returning to them rather than receding. We cannot have great colonies and dependencies, immense migrations, and fleets all over the world, for commerce or for national defence, without becoming daily more imperial than national, more cosmopolitan than domestic or even civic. We have to open and expand very quickly if we would fill our place in the wide world. When the enjoyment of domestic relations is so brief and so precarious, it becomes our duty to make the best use we can of them—that we may carry the ripe fruits of that brief husbandry into more lasting relations. Even at home a man may pass very quickly and completely out of the private circle into the public, and be a member of society rather than of a household. Anyhow, whatever happens, the man has to carry with him wherever he goes all the special graces and gifts he has acquired by the proper performance of his domestic duties. He ought to be the good son, the good brother, the good father, even when he has none in particular upon whom he can concentrate and lavish his affections. But as these relations certainly tend to the completeness of his character and his proper estimate of all others, so also they undoubtedly appertain to his perception of the Divine ideal. That God whom he has not seen, he can only love and know truly by first loving his brother whom he has

seen. He can only know a Father in Heaven by being first a good son to an earthly parent. It is said of the great navigator of the last century, Captain Cook, that he owed his pre-eminence and singular tact in the difficult art of finding his way in unknown seas and dangerous coasts to an early life spent on the shifting mud-banks and shoals of the Tees. From that he emerged to sail round the world. That is the very task which all, or nearly all, have to accomplish in these days. They have to learn the ways of peace and the arts of true love by the fireside, and then bring them to the calls of necessity, of duty, of Heaven, on the trackless ocean of the world.

XXXIV

IDEAL HUSBAND AND WIFE

FATHER, mother, brother and sister a man receives from Heaven, from chance, or from his last stage in the process of evolution, as he may please to regard it. They have to be accepted. They may be allowed —and, indeed, often are allowed—to take their places, as it may be, in the front or in the hinder ranks of a man's personal surroundings. This will depend much on their forwarding or hindering a man's particular ambition and plan of life. When, in the order of natural sequence, we come to the other relations, it can no longer be said that they are a necessity. Generally a man chooses his wife, and has to thank his own discernment or not, as may be. At least he thinks he chooses, and, should the choice be unfortunate, finds that he had not quite as free a will in the matter as he had supposed.

The one thing certain about a wife is that the result is different from the expectation—that is, if there were ever any particular and defined expectation. Age, illness, an increasing family, no family at all, household cares, want of means, isolation, incom-

patible prejudices, quarrels, social difficulties, all tell on the wife more than on the husband, and make her change more rapidly into that which she was not. Be she strong or weak, she is apt to revert to her own ways, if she has them, and if she has what is called a will of her own. In process of time a man discovers, contentedly or not, that Heaven made his marriage, not he.

The notion that a man can make a marriage which shall be entirely his own work from beginning to end, and a success under all the changes and chances of a matrimonial career, is presumptuous and idiotic. There will not be real union without much self-sacrifice, each chiefly bent on pleasing the other. To most men and women this is not easy, for what with self-confidence, self-will, self-esteem, and selfishness pure and simple, they enter the marriage state with a foregone conclusion on all the points upon which difference is possible. These are many. They will remain stumblingblocks and rocks of offence, unless one will gives way to the other, or both are softened by higher influences.

But in truth men have not ideals in this matter so much as women have. Their arrogant feeling that they have a world of women to choose from, and that they may pick and choose at discretion, and safely indulge in innocent and harmless flirtation, fills their mind with a shadowy crowd of ideals rather than one. Having to choose, and being, as they think, able

to choose, they so abuse the liberty of choice that they exercise it at last in a way that suggests an absence of choice. Women, on the contrary, start with very definite ideas of the man, the figure, the manners, the abilities, the occupation, the connections, and the expectations of the desired husband, but are nevertheless much more bound to accept the first-comer, and forego, from the beginning, the boasted liberty of choice.

All this, however, passes away, sometimes very quickly indeed. In a healthy state of things, and if all is well, the once distracted and confused ideal of the husband collects and harmonises into a practical unity with the real wife of his bosom. The dreams fade away and the fact remains. In the meanwhile another change gradually supervenes. Husband and wife form a new ideal in the married couple, with gain or loss, as it may be, to the two distinct ideals. It may be as the husband so the wife is, or it may be as the wife so the husband is, or it may be that they simply starve and blight one another's proper vitality and action. But the ideals survive in the collective mind of man, and no amount of matrimonial failure or mishap will prevent the ideal of a perfectly good and happy married couple from exercising a potent fascination on the human mind.

In the very worst ages of the world, when the dread reality of lawless passion broke through all restraint and confused all relations, marriage was still

a sublime, holy, and attractive idea. One of the most beautiful passages of Homer is an ideal conversation between Jupiter and Juno, who in that strange mythology was sister and wife, both bound by eternal decrees. She sweetly and humbly prepares a petition, which at first would imply some concession on his part. He replies that she is bound to do all he bids her, and she has no choice but to obey. But, on the other hand, it is equally his duty to lay upon her no hard commands. She must obey him, but he must never cease to please her.

If anyone went simply by history, or even by the lives of the best and greatest men in Greece or Rome, he might persuade himself that they consulted only their own passions, or caprice, or vulgar interest in their relations to the other sex; but in the midst of this moral chaos, when things were getting worse and worse, and were so described by poets and satirists, true marriage was still reverenced and regarded as the restorer and purifier of a fallen world, the reminder of a golden age, and the foretaste of a Paradise to come. Such was the ideal, and such its continual triumph over the worst scandals of republican Greece and imperial Rome.

XXXV

IDEAL FATHERS AND CHILDREN

I HAVE just said that men fancy they can choose their wives, and women fancy a husband such as they would like, and that in both cases the fancy is overruled and a very different reality takes its place, but that the idea survives, and is still beautiful and imperishable—indeed in many instances realised. When we come to children the case is very different. A man hopes, or even expects, to have them, and also, as a matter of course, to have the making of them. On the contrary, he may or may not have them, and he certainly has not the making of them. They are as much the gift of the Lord as any sudden stroke of fortune, such as the discovery of hid treasure or an unexpected legacy. If the purchaser of a barren tract of land finds a gold-mine in it, he is congratulated on his 'luck.' Much more 'lucky' is he who finds himself the father of a good child. Happier still is he if that child lives and prospers, and becomes the parent of like children.

In anticipation the parental joy is complete and unalloyed. How delightful to have the forming of a

heart fresh from Nature, and of a youthful intellect still free from earthly bias! Beware how you congratulate the ecstatic father of a son and heir. Remind him not of his responsibility. He dashes the dull thought away from him, as a bugbear of the foolishly wise. No employment can possibly be so delicious as kindling the affection of your own children, and opening their understanding. It would be a needless cruelty to the reader to describe the sad disappointment of these golden hopes, and the reaction that takes their place in the parental breast.

Happily Nature keeps the fount of hope deeper seated and fuller welling in the mother, though even that does not always save children from neglect. How often have I heard the expression of surprise that the children are not equal to either parent, having neither the abilities, the energy, and the public spirit of the one, nor the sweetness and grace of the other. A Greek philosopher speaks of it as a well-known fact, that the son of a genius is often a madman, and the son of a wise man an idiot, these being their respective degeneracies. The departure is often conscious, wilful, and deliberate. The son is the first to denounce, and even to ridicule, the generosity, the chivalry, the ready sympathy, the romantic enterprise, the lofty conceptions of the parent. Why should not all this stuff have been melted down into some form of solid property yielding so much a year?

But whatever hand the father may have had in this

default, and whether there be any default or not, the individual members of the family grow up on their own respective lines, and become what it was impossible to anticipate. The one thing certain is that the father did not make them as they are. The reality is quite apart from all his ideas, and in not a few instances he would even wish that his children had never been born. Yet the ideas remain, and flourish by disappointment. When a man loves that which is to be he may be said to be really loving himself alone; but when he loves that which he has lost, either by its disappearance or by its change, then it is not himself, but that which is gone from him, that he loves. Hope has been blasted; the fond possession is no more; but the regret is both sweeter and more enduring than the hope, and the remembrance more precious and salutary than the possession.

A great novelist represents an abbot who had once presided over a grand monastery as able to find a substitute in a flower garden. I cannot pretend to trace the decline or transference of heart affections under all circumstances, but I note that a monastery is not, like the family, a divinely ordained institution, and I cannot think it a common or a likely thing that the father or mother of a family could ever transfer to flowers the love they once bore to their own offspring. Parents are not always, nor even frequently, quite fair and even distributors of parental grace, but the parental affection still possesses the heart and saves it from

an entire transference to animal or inanimate objects. The fond idea still holds its own.

Everybody must be acquainted with instances in which, after many years of heated dispute, bitter recriminations, and cold indifference, a man will leave all his property to some one with natural claims upon him, to the disappointment of others who hoped to profit by the breach. In such cases it is to be presumed that a happy oblivion has buried all grievances, and the dying man has returned to his first love, that of brother, sister, or child. The idea itself is indestructible.

Nor is this return of estranged Nature to her first loves due, as some may think, to the hope of founding and endowing a family that shall perpetuate a man's name, and in a manner continue his existence in the land that he loves. It is the young and vigorous who entertain long hopes, who forecast a bright future, who lay deep foundations and build castles in the air, and who people futurity with their own flesh and blood.

These are ideas that write themselves on the blank sheet of minds still unoccupied, fresh, and free. The old have become accustomed to prune the extravagance of hope and desire. Weary of change, they are ever reverting to that past which changeth not. They look for rest in the irreversible. They have found by many melancholy instances that sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. As many a morrow has brought unlooked-for trouble, they will now leave

it in better hands than their own. I shall be told that as a fact many old people have left land and money to found institutions. Each such instance will call for a separate consideration. In most cases the bequest has been in fulfilment of an old engagement. If a man has thereby thought to save his soul, I shall leave that matter alone.

The natural relations are universal, and some indeed inevitable. They have their roots in a time beyond all human reckoning, and they point to an unborn and incalculable future. They reach in an ever-widening circle to the whole human race. They form our nursery, our first school, our life's companionship, our dearest earthly hopes, and our most far-reaching earthly anticipations. They belong to every period of our life, from utter helplessness to the strength that taxes discretion and the experience that no longer avails for purely selfish purposes. Every one of these natural relations has either purified, strengthened, and elevated the soul, or left a spring of vain regrets. Man can never quite rid himself of them, for he cannot but remember them; he must therefore be either much unhappier than the brute creation who do forget the ties of nature pitiably soon or be unspeakably happier. They have only a few months at stake in the play of natural affections, he an eternity.

XXXVI

HONOUR DUE TO FATHER AND MOTHER

How is it, and why is it, that the father seldom has the place he deserves—sometimes none at all—in the recollections of his children? It is a fact of serious—indeed, ominous—import. There is only one omission that can be called worse, and that is the want of real and outspoken gratitude to the Father in Heaven. Take the family group in any class of life, and you may have been acquainted with it for months or years without hearing more than the most casual and careless allusion to the father. The higher the class the worse the case is. So far as the children are concerned, the good deeds of the father must have preponderated; for what they have received from him, even if not entirely his own making, has yet been in his power. He must have sacrificed much for their sake.

Perhaps the father has made his money or got his land by honest industry, by some commercial business, office-keeping, or shop-keeping. He may even have risen from the industrial rank and file, and have been a good servant before he became a good

master. In that case the children owe him the more gratitude, for he has been the founder of the family and the maker of the estate. But the more they owe to the father the less disposed are they to acknowledge it. What pains will they often take to bury the honourable fact, to ignore it, to conceal it with equivocation and misrepresentation, to set their acquaintances on a wrong scent, taking them far away from the truth, to cut the old connections, to present themselves as having sprung up, heaven-sent, in the order of good society.

People most zealous—most fierce, indeed—in the cause of religious truth, and with the most precise opinions on the Eternal Essence—indeed, on every theological question—think it quite allowable to dissimulate, and simulate too, in the matter of their poor earthly fathers. You might enjoy the society of a great theologian, a wonderful stickler for the very truth in a good many mysteries, and yet never know that his father had kept a shop—say, for the sale of drugs, soap, candles, or stationery. His silence would leave you quite in the dark as to the extraordinary sacrifices made by the father. You might never hear that he had for years spent an hour a day in home lessons for his son, or that the parents—brothers and sisters, too—had been stinted of their fair share of outings, common treats, and social opportunities, in order to send one promising son to a good school and to college. You might be allowed

to infer that the whole family was somewhat inferior —indeed, hardly producible ; but it might never have been allowed to you to suppose that this general inferiority was the cost paid for the one unique superiority.

When this domestic treason, as it may be justly called, is almost universal—in this country, at least, and in its much belauded middle class, one sees why the honour due to father and mother was made, both by nature and by the Law, the foundation of all social virtues.

The lamentable and humbling fact is also a sufficient answer to another question. It has been said that, if there were a God, nature, being His work, would declare it so prominently, strongly, and vividly that there would be no resisting the truth. All would be compelled to confess it. But here we see that all men have earthly fathers, and most men have fathers to whom they owe very much besides their own existence, which is no slight boon, and yet that most men are quite indifferent as to their fathers, stupidly or wickedly silent, or positively ungrateful—returning, indeed, evil for good. That in the order of things the father passes away, should be interpreted as leaving a place in the hearts of the children for a higher and more spiritual conception ; but, in fact, as the earthly father passes away from memory and recognition, the idea of the Heavenly Father does also.

XXXVII

ONLY SON

AND now at last I come, step by step, delicately, and as one called to a last trial, to the idea which has the highest place in the Bible and in the Jewish policy, and which still unites, invigorates, and dignifies European society. This is the first-born : king and priest, or victim ; the son and heir ; the Only Son, the Only-Begotten Son ; the One with His Father, the ever-reigning, without beginning or end. It is what we commonly understand by the custom of primogeniture. Nature may give several sons, but they never rise to the rank and position of the first-born, unless by death or some default the place becomes vacant. The eldest son or eldest surviving son is alone a link in the golden chain that hangs from the footstool of Divine Majesty to the imitative thrones below. So let it be understood, when I am speaking of the only son, I mean the only son who succeeds to the title, rank, and power of his predecessor. I have to admit that France has lost the idea, but how much has she lost besides ! Without rudder, without mainmast, without ballast, she drifts at the mercy of

heaving ocean or sudden blast. The United States, too, have extinguished the rights of primogeniture. That might be a necessity in their case. With an inexhaustible family estate, and more need of heirs than of land, they had not even the power to set one son over the rest.

The most potent forces, the grossest scandals, and treasons in the camp worse than wars without have not overthrown or even weakened the idea embodied in our sovereign and in the higher house of our legislature. Whenever there is land in question, or property as fixed as land, and requiring single management, Englishmen not only give a preference to the eldest son, but will even create an estate for him. The idea is founded on notions of duty as well as right, for it is assumed that the eldest son inherits the responsibilities of the father, and stands in his place towards the younger children.

Such an idea cannot be realised unless all who are concerned ascertain and fulfil their proper parts in it, for any default on the part of either elder or younger is fatal. In fact, the idea is seldom fully realised; and not only in unhappy Ireland, but even in this wiser and more businesslike country, land is already too encumbered to bear the fresh burdens required for the establishment of new branches from the family tree. The difficulties and downfalls of the younger branches already present a sad contrast to the stateliness and seeming grandeur of the towering stem.

Notwithstanding these painful contrasts—indeed, by force of contrast—the idea of oneship, continuous oneship, prevails, and our dynasties, aristocracies, and gentilities never were stronger or more in honour than they are now, not only in this country but generally throughout Europe. A century ago all the thinkers in the world thought and freely boasted that they had struck a fatal blow at the principle of primogeniture, and I myself remember when it was being weighed in the balance of the reigning philosophy and found wanting. The idea survives, none the worse for all the philosophers had to say about it. Of course, we see it only in the concrete form—indeed, in a multitude of concrete forms, one quite unlike another; and in all concrete human forms there is a sad mixture of good and evil. But we have no occasion to set about sifting and analysing these forms in order to separate the good from the evil, for the idea itself is bright, genial, and, to English tastes, even natural and homelike. Ask almost any labourer, and he will tell you he prefers the old stock, which generally means to him the stationary stem, not the straggling branches and irregular suckers.

Europe has long had the teaching and institution of the whole world, and it may be that the principle of primogeniture is one of the lessons to be taught at school, and eventually forgotten, like a good deal crammed into the brains of unhappy competitors in these days. That, however, is a question of the future.

If anyone wishes to ascertain for himself whether the heirs of titles, houses, and lands are still as much admired and affected by humbler men as they were, we will say, only last century, he can easily do so. No flattery was then too gross, and no type too large, for a dedicatory epistle. But let him look on quietly the next time he happens to see a philosopher and a lord, or, say, a duke and a democratic satirist, in conversation. He will see at once that no breadth of opinion on any question, political, social, or theological, will ever wean an Englishman from his instinctive admiration of coronetted heads, whatever the heart or the brains below.

How can we seriously quarrel with a sentiment that promises peace in our borders for we know not how long? Nevertheless, it is little more than an idea. If anyone will take the trouble he may see for himself the fatalities, the aberrations, the inequalities, to which succession by primogeniture is liable. The fortunes of our peerage are as full of unexpected turns, abeyances, extinctions, and other vicissitudes as the wildest romance writer could venture to comprise in a three-volume novel. What, then, does the word 'primogeniture' really mean? It is an idea, and all the more powerful because liable to all kinds of accident, and refracted rather through a misty atmosphere than written on parchment or cut on stone.

XXXVIII

IDEA OF THE ONLY SON

SINCE only-sonship is so little realised, what is the idea ? Such an idea there certainly is, and it is the foundation of the great law of nature, of politics, and of European society, above mentioned. We have to quit the world of sensible realities, and search through the realms of imagination and sentiment. The only son is the continuation of self, yet not in such a way as to leave one's own self quite out of count. The only son is altogether agreeable to the will of the father, yet has a will of his own. The only son adds to the glory of his father, who yet is sufficient and needs no addition—indeed, cannot receive any. The father is absolute, and wishes to remain so ; yet the son cannot become absolute till the father has ceased to be absolute—indeed, to be at all in this world. There is a supposed partnership between the two, and an intercommunication of comfort and delight, which is not needed, and which has no result, for when the partnership ceases the son is only what the father was before. Though the most common and most

pleasant of all ideas, it is the least supported or explained by facts. The only son is divided, dimmed, and perhaps eclipsed altogether when there are more sons. The only son draws from the father, and is seldom quite obedient to the father. The only son can soon pass judgments on his father, does so, and has generally good reasons for doing so. The only son can be either far below the moral rank of his father or far above, for the wonder is sometimes how so good a man had such a son; sometimes how so bad a man, or so weak a man, or so stupid a man, had a son of such genius and goodness.

Nor is the world quite satisfied that the son should be very like his father, for it wants a change, and sometimes feels that there can be too much of a good thing. Nevertheless, it likes continuity, and strong foundations deep in nature and in time, and something that can be reckoned upon. There has not yet occurred in our long history any one sovereign at all like the last, or any one son at all like his father; yet we all feel a oneness and homogeneousness in our history, and we are pleased to regard all our sovereigns as children of Charlemagne, Alfred, the Conqueror, Henry II., Edward III., and so forth. The 'British Bible,' as the peerage is fancifully styled, contains the record of many thousand only sons, as peers and baronets may be called. We are all proud of these endless genealogies. None complain of the bulk of the volume, or find it a labour to turn over

the leaves. Yet ideal only-sonship seems to disappear the instant we do this.

It does not really disappear, it only becomes brighter and purer, and what disappears is the poor earthly rival or substitute. The 'only-begotten son' of spiritual conception is the fulfilment of all one's best hopes and aspirations—one's own self as it should be. This, we know, is far beyond our own power ; it is God's work.

True, the idea of an only son finds an earthly type on a larger and more lasting scale than one brief lifetime. The next generation of the human race is the only son of the present, and England of the future is the only son of England of to-day. But our relations with the past, even the very recent past, do not justify us in the attempt to form distinct notions of the future, which will probably only resemble us in dealing hard measure to its predecessors. There is nothing in the world's scale, or in the national scale, to fulfil the ideal of an only-begotten son, which, however, still survives, and craves for an eternal fulfilment.

The ancients had not much to say to the idea of an only son, which had little place in their public life. Yet that little is significant. Hector's only son, after affording a beautiful picture of sweet and prophetic infancy and maternal love, was thrown from the walls of Troy, giving place to another only son, by another father, successor of several generations of only sons.

From this tragic beginning sprang the great family of the Æacidæ, which reigned for a thousand years, and then contributed to one of the grandest of Roman triumphs a captive king, who, for the sake of his children, endured to be made a spectacle, and to become a faithful and useful servant to the Senate of Rome.

One other only son there was in Greek mythology. This was that most unaccountable personage, Hercules, the only son of Jupiter, borrowed from Tyre, or Egypt, and transmitted, in a changed form, to Rome, where he became thoroughly domesticated. As the god of many trials, many sufferings, many adventures, and many achievements, he won an almost supreme place in earthly affairs, notwithstanding a certain rudeness and grotesqueness. His character remains as great a riddle as that of his contemporary, Samson.

XXXIX

IDEAL INSTITUTIONS

ALL life, and every part of it, presents a continual contrast between the ideal and the real, generally a violent contrast, expressing itself in warfare of tongues, pens, or worse weapons. We are very proud of our constitution, and we have been long urging its adoption upon states that had still to choose their form of government. That advice would be founded on the idea of a constitution working as it ought to work. The present reality at Westminster speaks for itself.

Again, there are many ideas of the Church as it should be; but not one of them is realised in the present condition of the Church of England, or in that of any other communion. We fondly look over the heads of our Roman Catholic neighbours, and try to exchange friendly signals with the Greek and Oriental Churches upon some fortuitous idea of their doctrine and discipline; but it is simply because we do not know so much of them as we do of the Pope's adherents at our own doors.

Sixty years ago our universities were not quite as they should be. The reality was found wanting in some respects. So it was abandoned for an idea supposed to be better adapted to carry out the notion of a university, and after two generations it is discovered that the substance is gone, and that the shadow we have in its place does not fulfil expectation.

I have heard a 'deputation,' as the man was called—that is, a travelling canvasser for a London society—call a country parish, with its pretty church and parsonage, a fool's paradise. Everyone who heard him knew that it was not a paradise—such as Paradise was before the Fall. But that was no reason why the idea of a paradise should be wholly abandoned.

The greatest of the Roman Fathers called the Church of Christ the City of God, but that was the Church as it should be, and as it was meant to be, and not the Church as it was even in that Father's own time. In every age of the Church, not excepting our own, Christians have been following ideas, and have been cheered by the hope of early attainment. All the monastic orders, all the restorations, all the reforms have been in pursuit of the ideal. The Reformation aimed at an ideal purity of devotion and practice. Even our Laudians and Puritans respectively pursued ideals, not unworthy of respect, but not yet fulfilled, or at all likely to be fulfilled. All our

missionary operations are ideal, with results sadly short, if not quite contemptible. The promoters blow their trumpets annually, for hope springs immortal in the human breast, and Englishmen will never confess themselves beaten.

The Law of Moses was designed to carry out many ideas, such as a theocracy, the possession of the whole Promised Land, indefectible family inheritance, isolation from bad neighbours, a high ritual, a simple faith, a noble and educated priesthood, an oracular system, a sense of purity and holiness and ready justice. But none of these ideas were ever quite realised, and when compromises were made, even the lower ideas of the compromise failed also. The establishment of a monarchy, the selection of the House of David and of Jerusalem, were ideas only partially fulfilled. No sooner was the Temple built than it was insulted by idolatrous rivals. The promise of a perpetual possession of the land, forfeited by breaches of the covenant, was followed by captivities and dispersions.

Here was a succession of ideas all pointing upwards, with the realities ever gravitating downwards. But all these ideas looked to better things than the express terms of the covenant, and it was rather the idea than the present realisation that showed the Divine Will. The Law still repeats its lessons to the human heart, even though the letter be long abolished or disregarded. There is no law

so full of wise lessons and salutary warnings. There is no code of man that cannot be referred to this foundation. Time has told on the letter, but the spirit remains. After more than three thousand years the ideas of the Law of Moses still hold their place in every wise, every Christian, every legal mind.

XL

WORK AND TALK POINTING TO GOD

If we go out of the family circle, and enter on the work of life—quite as universal and as necessary to true existence as birth itself—it will be found that all ordinary employments and relations have both a lower and a higher significance, the one ending here, the other pointing to a better world, and preparing for it. We have duties, sometimes irksome and burdensome and very difficult, to our teachers and masters, to our employers, to all with whom we contract any obligation, to the public, to the State, to the needy or misguided, to the lands that lie in darkness, to the merit that soars above us, to the baseness that grovels below, to truth and to error, to art and science as the gifts of God.

The greater men become the less they can feel themselves their own masters, and the more are they apt to complain that neither their time, nor their strength, nor their money, nor their mind itself, can be called their own. They are, they say, the servants and slaves of an ungrateful public. They must do something; they must submit to be thwarted; they

must be generally beaten; they must be content to spend themselves in vain, without any return in thanks or in common fairness.

Surely, in these relations, multifarious, worldly, and generally very humble, there is a call from Heaven, and a service to be performed for One who is, indeed, our only Master. It is plain that a man may, indeed, have his expected reward in the discharge of his many relative duties; but, if he has, let him beware, for he may have no other. However, happily for him, he seldom, if ever, has his reward here below.

Nor is there any ordinary occupation that does not continually draw a man more to God and to man, making him better acquainted with Divine operations and with human needs. The most universal of employments is that of the husbandman, who works under an ever-changing sky, and sees Nature in its brightest and dullest and sweetest and most awful moods. He sees the sun-risings and settings; he catches the first glimpse of the golden dawn, and veils his eyes before the intolerable lustre of noonday. He sees the crop and the tares, the good soil, the rank, the rocky, and the trodden down. His work is the staff of life, the great staple of the human race.

The workman, whatever his occupation, is under orders, and can seldom choose his earthly master. He must take work generally as it comes. He may have to descend into the heart of the earth, and dig out primeval forests to warm the palace, the cot,

or the factory. If he is sheltered there from the caprice of the skies, he encounters more terrible dangers. His lot may be cast on the waters, where by night and by day everything reminds him of God's majesty and power. All these occupations at once humble man and raise him ; they sharpen his wit, they refine his perceptions, and concentrate his purposes. They take him out of himself, they teach him, they beckon to him, they bring him actual messages from an unseen Power, and call for a continual response.

Through all honest work the Word of God comes. It may not be heard. It may be heard, and obstinately disregarded. The only thing left in the mind may be some superstition, or worse disfigurement of the truth. But even error, even blasphemy, testifies to the fact that a message has come to the mind, and possibly touched the heart, which it requires some effort, some ingenuity, to silence or deny.

But what are we to say to all the follies of idleness and wealth, to the trifles of the passing hour, the extravagances of fashion, the toys, the hobbies, the frivolities of children, young or old ? Where is the Word of God there ? Surely it is there too. It is in the cockle and the tare ; it is in the minutest insect that crawls, or bites, or stings ; it is in the dust and in the foam flying before the wind. Folly of any kind carries its own condemnation in its front. It passes away as quickly as it comes. It disappoints ;

it leaves a void. Its constant text is that of the Preacher, 'All is vanity.' As well open a grave as a drawer full of old fashions and forgotten toys. What so dreary now as the wit and humour of beaus and belles of the Georgian era? As one reads it one feels more than ever that for every idle word we shall have to render an account.

But the Georgian era was not less witty than our own era, or any other. It has frequently been lamented by scholars that they failed to appreciate the jokes of Greece and Rome, and they have even suggested that there was then no such thing as humour, except of the coarsest kind. But we need not go back two thousand years to discover that wit can soon become stale, flat, and unprofitable. It is stated on good authority that if a French gentleman or politician has to leave his country for so short a time as two years, he finds himself old-fashioned. His expressions are out of date, and he has lost *les malices et les délicatesses*—the sarcasms and refinements that have come up while he was away. Is there not a lesson here to those who can look beyond the fleeting hour?

XLI

IDEAS OF TIME

IN one matter of the highest importance our wishes, our ideas, and our convictions are quite at variance with our senses and our intellect. We have a great and, as we think, very solid idea of the present—the present time, the present state of things. To cling to the present is the safe side. We seem to know what that is, better indeed than the past or the future. A great Roman poet exhorts his boon companions to enjoy themselves to-day, for they know not what the morrow may bring. In his calculation the past was irretrievable, the future uncertain, the present alone sure. But in point of fact there is no such thing as the present time. Less than the minutest portion of a second divides the past and the future, and as the past no longer exists, and the future does not yet exist, there is no such thing in all existence as time, whether past, or present, or future. They are all ideas, and not fixed or measurable ideas, but the merest suggestions, meaning one thing to one person, another to another, and having very different significa-

tions as one state of things rapidly gives way to another state of things.

The past so little concerns us, except as illustrating the course or tendency of human affairs, that anything like a fondness for the past is a matter of mirth or of compassion, as may be. If a man harps on the past, he is thought unserviceable, half-dead, an encumbrance, a shade, much in the way. It is more allowable for a woman to live in the past, for people wish her to be innocently, even if unprofitably, occupied. There is, indeed, as much fighting about the past as there was over the dead body of Patroclus, but it is quite a matter of sentiment, each party wishing to do the funeral honours. On the other hand, the future is impenetrable. The next instant may totally change either our own state or the state of things about us. In spite of these overwhelming difficulties we are always labouring to fix the present —there being really no present—to sum up and perpetuate the past which is no more, and to forestall, command, and appropriate the future, which may or may not come.

The outward and visible world everywhere testifies to our strong faith in the present. Our cities, our public institutions and our private houses, our armaments and our establishments, most of our current literature, and much even in our religious formularies, exhibit the present like the man in possession—master of the field. We act and talk as

if all about us would last, if not for ever, yet very long indeed—to the second or third generation. Now here is an idea so solid, so substantial, as to seem a real thing, while it is really nothing. We cannot help imagining and grasping that which is one thing when we draw in a breath, and another when we exhale it. We are forced to the conclusion that while nothing that we see, hear, feel, or know has an existence, yet there is that which does exist, for there is nothing we are so sure of, and that we calculate so exactly, as time. The time, however, that we thus calculate is the record of change, not of endurance, for mere endurance would leave no matter for record. Time itself disappears in the conception of eternity, in comparison with which billions of years are nothing. Eternity itself eludes mortal grasp.

So here are three nothings, viz. past, present, and future, making up another nothing, viz. time, which vanishes as we gaze on Eternity, which recedes ever beyond human ken. In spite of all this we do all of us believe in Existence, in the present, and in time, for we are overmastered by the idea. The contradiction and the perplexity are human, for bird or beast know nothing of it. The whole human race exercises itself on these very topics, and has its annals and chronicles and endless genealogies, its genesis, its eschatologies. Even where there are no pyramids, no dynasties entombed one upon another, there are traditions proving that man instinctively cares about his origin and his

destination, and the seemingly infinite order of Divine succession. These are ideas in the mind of man, and therefore of the Deity, and as much realities as the globe under our feet. What reasonable being, with a particle of religion or even common sense, can suppose such ideas—really only ideas—as past, present, and future, time and eternity, to be given us for nothing, for no end or purpose, unless it be a purpose worthy of an Almighty to create myriads of puppets, deceive them with false ideas, and send them in all directions looking for that which exceeds all human estimate, but which, so tell us our philosophers, has no existence at all?

It is plain that in this matter earth makes promises which it is utterly unable to fulfil. It gives glimpses which it at once shuts in. It seems to say—and we are not behindhand in taking its word for it—that there is a present and a past and a future—time and eternity. Sense and intellect alike fail to grasp and comprehend these ideas. But, though the voice is of earth, it is God and his Word that give us these assurances. The Apostle of the Word reveals to us that the Word, and the Word alone, is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the Reconciler of Time and Eternity.

XLII

DUTY

DUTY and ideas are so necessary to human life in its lower as well as its higher forms, so necessary indeed in their mutual relation, that it may seem strange tha they should be continually contrasted as distinct, alternative, and antagonistic. Yet they are so contrasted, and that not merely by writers with a theory to maintain, but by the most ordinary people. A dutiful child they expect to be rather wanting in originality, that is, in new ideas; and in like manner a child with a genius, that is, with a flow of ideas, they expect to be liable to fail in duty.

Some philosophers deny altogether the existence of any such sentiment as that of simple duty, reducing it to comparison of ideas, one of which a man may happen to find more to his taste than another. Running up and down the scale of tastes and appetites they find that at one end a man becomes absorbed in one or two master ideas, and at the lower end the supposed instinct of duty is lost in sensualism. In the intermediate portion of the scale there may be a struggle, the issue of which may never be foreseen. The Epi-

curean divinities had no duties, except to themselves; brutes have no duties—none, at least, that they are aware of, and can regard as duties. Mere custom or habitude is not a sense of duty. But in one form or another, and in one degree or another, duty covers the entire ground of human nature and human society. There is always and everywhere a duty to be done. In solitude, in a dungeon—if one can suppose it—or on a desert island, there are duties to oneself, to absent friends, and to One above.

Duty is the most pervading of all sentiments, the readiest on all occasions, the quickest to apply itself, and the most to be trusted to do the work laid upon it. It has to encounter in early life not so much the deep and strong besetment as the sudden fancy, the stray idea, the momentary impulse. There is always something pleasanter suggesting itself from without or from within. You are asked to do something, or to believe something, or perhaps only to remember it. Something else is preferable, perhaps simply because it is your own. It may not be much of a matter in itself; a breath turns the scale in favour of your own fancy, and you have then added strength to your natural waywardness. You have become still more wilful than you were before.

Duty appeals to us from many quarters. It always brings a lesson, which should be a blessing. Each time it teaches a virtue, even if it be obedience and no more. If accepted and obeyed, it cannot fail to

enlarge the nature, and attract to it the manifold gifts of Heaven. If the habitual repugnance or secret fancy always carries the day, then the enlargement which follows is in self, and the growth is in obstinacy. Duty is always ordered for us. It is an intervention, even if it be only some matter of routine, for it breaks in upon something more to our liking, probably too much to our liking. Successfully resisted, duty becomes the most irritating, worrying, and importunate of all Mentors; and philosophers, on their own grounds, are justified in ridding the earth of a nuisance by a universal proclamation that there exists no such thing.

These innumerable and infinitely varied duties, formed round one central idea and sense of duty, can only be the Word of God, always and everywhere moving us and offering to guide and strengthen us. Anyone accustomed to a voice or a sound, be it ever so inarticulate, if he expect it and wait for it will hear it instantly and without fail. The sense of duty is the still small voice which finds its way to the heart and soul when all else has failed. The word Duty is used in a general and comprehensive sense, like Nature, Providence, Chance, and many other terms that have acquired a personal significance. It is a simple fact that the bond of duty binds all intelligences in reciprocal relations under one Father of all. To Him finally we owe all the duties that we owe to all our fellow-creatures. He is the Lord Paramount of all

true allegiance. This service does not consist only in prayer and praise and thanksgiving, and other acts of a distinctly religious character, such as sacraments, missions, church-building, fasts, and festivals, but even more in a manifold and incessant service of duty to all with whom we have dealings in the common course of our lives. He who does his duty on all occasions, who passes all ordeals, who meets all calls, and is to all the same, becomes, as far as man can become, the perfect man, even as God is perfect—that is, a humble partaker of the Divine perfections.

Greek philosopher and Jewish sage alike toiled through the night of ages to put together into one perfect character the scattered parts of wisdom and righteousness. Ascending from law, from ordinances and institutions, from myths, systems, and theories, they endeavoured to imagine the really great and good man—the man who does his duty to God and to man. What they accomplished was the work of God, that is, the Word of God in them. What they fell short was due to their weakness or their waywardness.

They did indeed miss the truth, for they failed to foresee Him who was truly God and truly man. But we cannot conclude that their labour was quite lost, or that it concerns us not. The idea of personal, of private, and of public duty had certainly attained a high place in human thought and human regard when our Lord came to fulfil it. During what should have been nineteen centuries of continual and progressive

fulfilment, Christians have allowed other religious ideas to take the place of duty or encroach on its provinces, and the very idea of duty to be made an ill use of. Casuistry and even morality would not have acquired an evil, or at least a lower significance, had duty been allowed to hold its own, and to insist on its fresh titles to universal observance, now that it had been taught, fulfilled, and exemplified by the very Word of God.

The existence of a sense of duty is a simple fact, known to all that have not hardened themselves against it by continual neglect, ending in stubborn resistance, or reasoned themselves out of it by some foolish philosophy. Like every other sense, it has to be cultivated and trained. It has powerful, flattering, and captivating rivals. By whatever a man does—be it good or be it evil, be it wise or be it foolish—he incurs obligations, which upon the basis he has himself laid down, must be discharged. He must hold to his word, keep his promise, stand by his friend, and succour his ally, unless he is prepared to own himself wrong altogether, and to make reparation to all who are affected by his original wrong-doing and subsequent repentance.

When there is so much to withdraw from duty and to compete with it; when, for example, a man 'curst,' as the poet says, 'with a taste,' finds art and science, music or architecture, vastly pleasanter and more elevating than the very humble drudgery neces-

sary for the proper maintenance of an increasing family or the spiritual needs of a large parish, it can only be said that the victim of this inward struggle must look out of the world of sense for that which should turn the scale. If sense be his enemy, then let duty be his friend. Duty, whether it has devolved upon us by circumstances, or has been willingly undertaken within the compass of lawful choice, is the Word of God. That alone is a consideration which ought to redeem it and exalt it in all eyes, investing it with a charm above all that sense and imagination can offer.

Duty is an idea that unites and binds in one all society, all the moral ideas, all relations and classes, all degrees from the highest to the lowest, all lawful occupations, all time, in a continued succession of mutual obligations. The glory of personal enterprise in a purely voluntary cause, the brilliancy of successful achievement, the sudden splendour of the newly risen hero of the day, all pale before the man who is doing what he was bid to do, and finds in that his sufficient reward. He has had his difficulties maybe. It is not always easy to ascertain duty, and it may be above mortal strength. But the education of duty is generally simple enough, for a child can seldom be found wrong or much perplexed when it is honestly trying to learn its first lesson, or discharge its first errand, or submit to its first denial. The consideration that it is the Word of God gives strength to the

arm, simplicity to the choice, and light to the eye. You feel sure you are in the right direction. You know your landmarks and your bearings, and you cannot be far wrong.

Duty comes down from Heaven, and returns to Heaven. The Old Testament, from the first page to the last, is a history of ordinances given, obedience rewarded, and disobedience punished. Our Lord is the great Example of duty. He came down from the bosom of His Father to do His Father's will at the sacrifice of His own; to execute a certain work of which he would have to give account, and to restore to His Father's hands those whom His Father had committed to Him. With an abundance of illustrations taken out of the various conditions of human life, our Lord exhibits Himself as ever doing that which a good servant, or any subordinate, does to his master and superior. He even represents the Almighty as measuring task-work exactly, requiring its completion sternly, and severely punishing default. The Apostles had the same deep sense of duty. They had work to do, and they were bound to do it. They would not submit to any human standard, for to God alone would they give account. Duty, indeed, is the only motive that stands the severe trial and the long strain. Romance, chivalry, 'grand ideas,' are often as the golden mists of a summer morning that disappear by noonday. To the self-willed, self-confident, and inexperienced, any motive is pleasanter than

duty, which they feel to be nothing better than a stupid and foolish sort of slavery. They will join any crusade, enter any undertaking, and embrace any companionship, if they can thereby furnish themselves with a reply to the calls of duty. After many difficulties and failures, and much acquaintance with the ever-promising, ever-disappointing world, at last a man comes back to duty, and is only too glad to find a simple duty yet to be done. He has still more reason to be happy if he finds he can do it heartily, as to the Lord.

XLIII

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY and duty run in parallel lines from much the same premises to much the same conclusions, but are not quite the same thing. Responsibility means having to render an account, which brings one closer to the idea of *Logos* than duty seems to do. Duty is the more instinctive of the two, responsibility the more rational. Duty is often left to the assessment of the person owing it, and thereby subjected to large deductions, for a man may easily persuade himself that he has acquitted himself of his duty when he has done nothing at all, or worse than nothing. Responsibility must be discharged on the terms of the person imposing it, and upon him it rests to determine whether it has been faithfully discharged. Responsibility is one of the most prominent and most impressive ideas in our I ord's discourses ; and that note is supported in the apostolic writings. Where some might expect an appeal to the sense of duty, our Lord makes it rather to the natural feelings or instincts of fathers, sons, brothers, and mankind in

general in their tenderer moods. But a final account is pressed upon everybody.

Responsibility covers more ground than duty ; it is a more practical and piercing idea ; it can less be avoided ; it is not saved by default of the object, or the occasion, or the means ; it presupposes an actual and definite trust, a personal judge, and a day of account ; it implies that you have freely and willingly committed yourself to a particular course, and are bound to complete it at all hazards. A man may easily bring himself to deny his duties, on one plea or another ; and has at all events the ready plea that as others have failed of their duty to him, so he may be excused if he fail somewhat himself. In the crowd and confusion and hurry-skurry of human affairs, at least in what may be called a scene of action—as in trade, politics, and amusements—it may not be easy to find who you are most indebted to. It may even be possible to think oneself obliged to nobody. Relatives and neighbours will be so apt to take their own way, and pursue their own pleasure or advantage, that a man may be almost driven to the conclusion that it is best to do the same, and that in this world everybody must take care of himself. Of course, it is quite impossible to keep an account of favours bestowed and received, tendered and refused, with everybody one has ever had to do with. Our Lord most pointedly discourages, indeed forbids, any attempt at this sort of merchandise. We are absolutely to keep

no accounts at all where brotherhood should settle all differences. But whenever we turn over the sacred page we are encountered by responsibility in one of its many and various forms; man is represented as always having an account to render to some one who has employed him, trusted him, duly instructed him, and so left him no excuse.

When people are too self-indulgent, or too self-confident, or too proud to allow of any interference with their own ways, however inconsistent with moral propriety, they will say that it concerns only themselves, and that nobody else has a voice in the matter. So it is admitted there is an account to be rendered to self. But who and what is that self? It is a self with a future here, and maybe hereafter. It is a self not altogether the same as the present self, for while the bare identity may remain, its composition and its circumstances may be very different. It may be a creature of passion to-day, of reflection a few years hence; it may be a blank sheet to-day, a botched and blurred record of bitter experiences and unavailing repentances before the glass is run out. But in all this change our identity remains unchanging—the same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. So long as heart or sense remain in a man, the account to be rendered to One above will always pursue him. It is the one universal relation there is no denying or quite forgetting. This is the Word, the *Logos*, the voice that never quite ceases to call, never, perhaps, to be heard

and recognised. A man may succeed in silencing every earthly tribunal, crushing every power of multitudes, senates, and states, stifling opinion, and making shame itself a contemptible superstition, but he will never be quite able to drown or forget the secret misgiving that he will have to answer for it. Were all the world now answerable to him, that would only represent the dimensions and the weight of his own responsibility to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Every kind of personal power, be it wealth, talent, beauty, rank, or an opportunity making a person what is called 'master of the situation,' conflicts with the sense of duty. Exalted sentiments take its place, and even generosity has more chance of admission than strict and measured obligation. What is the good of these abundant means, or this splendid pre-eminence, if it is all forestalled, anticipated, cut up and divided by pre-existing claims, leaving one neither enjoyment nor credit? That the Word of God is easily shut out in such cases we have His own warrant in the awful sentence that it is impossible for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven; and in that other note of doom, 'This night shall thy soul be required of thee.'

In truth, man is never in more peril than when, together with great power or opportunity, he also wishes to make a grand use of them. He very naturally conceives that he may exercise his choice. The

world is his prerogative. It is impossible, indeed contrary to his feelings, to spend the means and the opportunity on himself, but he certainly has a fair claim to choose the work to be done and the manner of doing it. Yet unless he keep steadily in view that the opportunity and the means have been lent to him, and that he is to beware of seeking his own honour and glory, and not that of the Giver—that is, of the Lender—he had better never have enjoyed the opportunity and the means. He has given no heed to the Word, and the Word has no place in him.

The above warnings to the rich and great were given at a time of visitation. A day of judgment was at hand. The king was returning from a far country. The master of the house was coming home. The account of a stewardship was soon to be demanded. The creditor was soon to give the debtor the choice of payment or bondage. The time and occasion were critical, as no time has been before or since. The signs of the times were so plain that a child might interpret them. But emperors and kings, the wise and the prudent, and the leaders of religious factions could not.

But is it indeed the fact that such characters as I have supposed are really oppressed by the sense of undischarged responsibility, neglected opportunity, and abused power, as the time approaches when an account will have to be rendered? Do not worldly statesmen die as happy, nay, sometimes happier

than their more scrupulous rivals? One exception occurs to me which I have ever felt to betray a deep uneasiness. Such a man as I am supposing felt his time was short, and he was lamenting the incessant worry, waste of power, baffling of purpose, and generally inadequate results that had marked his career. He felt conscious of his integrity, for he had always done for the best, though it was seldom his best that had carried the day. Yet nobody would do justice to his motives, not even his supporters and friends. 'Posterity will,' said his comforter. 'All that posterity can know or think about me,' the aged statesman replied, 'will belong to my name, not to me.' Is it possible that this was a vain effort to escape from identity, and to be lost in outer space?

As I read over what I have written on this head, I perceive that I have described duty in conflict with its nobler antagonists. I have pictured conflicts on the Homeric scale, hero with hero, giant with giant, demi-god with demigod. One after another, Pride, Opinion, Prejudice, Popularity, Ambition, advance into the open, and defy Duty to check them if it can. But the chief foes of duty are not the few but the many, not the heroic but the vulgar. They do not even fight fairly, or in the light of day. They do all they can to keep things in a muddle, affairs in a muddle, their own minds and memories in a muddle, in order that out of that muddle they may always pick what suits their purpose, and in that muddle they may decide any uncertainty

to their own advantage. Duty has no force, no meaning at all, to the habitual muddler, for the only duty he is ever aware of is that of pleasing himself, and getting out of the consequent difficulties by the handiest, readiest, and shortest means, be they fair or be they foul. For such persons—and they are legion—accountability is the only moral force applicable. Many a man has never spoken the truth in his life, or felt there was such a thing, or even known that he had a conscience, or, knowing it, cared for it, till he stood in the dock or in the witness-box, or had to render account to some 'hard master,' quick to detect, prompt to convict, and sure to chastise. For this rabble of common offenders Responsibility is the rule. As regards the great majority of men, of whatever class or employment, an appeal to the sense of duty is a solemn farce, showing some hypocrisy in those who make it. They must know that men in general will not do their duty unless they are made to do it, and that they cannot be made to do it unless they are compelled to render frequently a full and exact account.

XLIV

DUTY THE WORD

THAT the sense of duty is indeed the Word of God, teaching and training the conscience, and ever recalling it to the right direction, will seem a truism to many; but, as I have had occasion to notice, there are philosophers who denounce and proscribe the sense of duty as a fiction, a stupidity, a thing that has no real existence. The question, as they understand it, lies between duty and ideas, considered as the springs of moral life and motives of action. Ideas, regarded only as the pictures of imagination, can be seen with the mind's eye, painted, measured, quickened into living reality, communicated to all the world and all time. Even if they do not obtain, or even require, conscious and express belief, they nevertheless show themselves in real life. We entertain ideas, we are proud to originate ideas, we compare ideas, we pass them on from mouth to mouth and from generation to generation. There can be no question, then, of their existence or of their power. But what and where is duty? Who ever saw it? Who can paint it or describe its figure and

proportions? Reduced to an abstraction, it is an instinct, hardly rational, if not quite brutish, not to say material—a mere resolution of forces. If it be a force, like gravitation, it is not so regular, so accountable, so certain to do its right work, as the forces of Nature. It can have no place in any philosophy of life aiming at certainty and exactness. Even ghosts can be described and discussed; but duty has not even figure or expression.

On the other hand, there are those who are not philosophers, but who go with them and even surpass them in the harshness of the maxims they apply to real life. They will take no account of ideas as things beyond calculation, and can only regard duty as a system of slavery, in which they wish to find themselves the task-masters, not the slaves. It is evident, then, that duty and ideas have both to be recognised and put in proper relation. So what has duty to do with ideas, or ideas to do with duty? What have they to do with feeling? What have they to do with calculation, or pure mathematics, or business, or the ordinary work of life? The very word 'ideas' has an ill look with some good folks, as if they only led people astray, and the less a man had of them the better.

But the truth is we none of us can help having ideas, and what we have to do is to control them, to select them, to use them, and to cultivate them rightly. The ploughman and the shopkeeper have ideas, while sticking ever so closely to their business.

But even before any ideas about the Deity, the Gospel, the Church, salvation, or worship, everybody has to earn his daily bread by honest labour of some sort or other; and in most cases necessity reduces ideas to a very narrow compass.

Let us take duty first. The philosophers referred to above—that is, people frequenting clubs, indulging in light, airy talk—insist upon it that there is no such thing as duty. They maintain that ideas—that is, images, recollections, fancies, or what not—present themselves to people in some chance order and fashion, and then each person accepts and harbours and follows the idea most to his taste. It may be a good idea—say, the idea of a virtuous and happy mother of a growing family, or it may be something very different. A man likes the former idea, and works hard for it; or he likes the latter, and works too, perhaps even harder and with less scruple, or less regard to appearances. Where is the duty in this matter? say our philosophers. It is liking. Everybody does what he likes. 'Show me duty,' they cry. Describe it. Put your finger on it. Trace it. Tell us whence it comes and whither it goes. Does it admit of scientific treatment and language? If not, it is nothing but a foolish superstition—worse, indeed, for superstitions can be very curious and picturesque. They can be used for purposes of illustration or decoration, like the ugly figures used for gargoyles in cathedrals. But duty is a shadow, a ghost, an

incubus, and a bore. In fine, there is no such thing as duty, it is maintained, either to God or to your neighbour, and the answers embodying these alleged duties are sometimes laid under the same general condemnation as the rest of the Church Catechism.

Besides these duties there is also a duty to oneself, or what can be so described; but the framers of the Church Catechism had a good many rocks and shoals to give a wide berth to, and they had not much to say on this point. Self-respect, or self-love, was the basis of several schools of ancient philosophy that did nobody much good, that quickly changed for the worse, and that passed away.

Duty, generally speaking, is the sense of owing something, much perhaps, even more than you can ever pay, to one or more persons. The sense of duty can be proved to exist by its frequent difficulty and disagreeableness, and by the fact that it cannot become pleasant except by recognition and obedience. It is the outcome of the three faculties of the human mind, imagination, sentiment, and reason, habitually exercised in proper proportion. A man might as well say, with Napoleon, that appetite—that is, hunger and thirst—governs the world, or that pounds, shillings, and pence govern the world, or that self-interest governs the world, which is almost the one motto of some politicians, as that imagination is the commanding faculty.

Each of these faculties may be cultivated in

excess, with very ill consequences, but no one can be dispensed with. Imagination may present to a man the smiles of his wife when he hands over to her the whole of his week's wages on his return home on Saturday night; but he will be likely enough to catch at some more immediately attractive appeal to vulgar appetite, unless he has acquired a sense of duty to his wife and family, implying affection and some comparison of consequences.

Let it be granted that imagination is necessary to duty. Let it imply any number of distinct images or ideas. Ideas, imagination, sentiment, reason, and duty are all matters of growth—relative, aggregate, and harmonious growth. They are living things. They are the work—indeed, as far as they are good, they are the sensible presence—of the Living God. On every new occasion He addresses us, appealing to our free-will—our mysterious, but undeniable power of doing as we please, right or wrong. That inner tribunal is complex, dark, and silent. But in a very short time, a few seconds perhaps, it can handle very many pleas, and dispose of many issues. In that inner court of the mind is heard a still small voice. It is the Word of God, that whispers the right reply.

Of course our philosophers will say, What proof, what evidence is there of all this? We know there are persons and things, they say, and we know that there are images, or memories, of persons and things; but what and where is God, and what and

where is duty? Are there not plenty of people who talk about God, and pretend that they serve God, and even make it their business to preach Him, and who yet fail of their duty, and are indeed quite indifferent to it? There are, it must be allowed. But it must be concluded that they who do not discharge their obligations to God do not believe in Him in any real way; for it is by works that faith is proved.

XLV

GRATITUDE

GRATITUDE occupies a large place in the Bible, and also in all sentimental talk and literature. To a perfectly disinterested reader it is always a delightful conception, only too natural, too certain, and too commonplace. If a man is nothing else, it is felt that he must be grateful: he can hardly help it; even wild beasts are grateful, even malefactors and ruffians. An act of gratuitous kindness is believed to be always sure of a full and continual recognition of the favour received. Gratitude has almost usurped and monopolised the title of obligation. We may forget a duty, shirk responsibility, and feel it a sore burden to be liable to account, but we can never cease to be obliged to those whom we have found friends in need, who have discharged the debt for us, cured the wound, broken the bonds, set us at large, and made us men again. The etymology of the word 'gratitude,' which implies not only feeling but fruit also, suggests a doubt of its invariable appearance on the proper occasion. Land can be warmed by the sun, and moistened by the shower. It can even receive the

solid and costly attention of good husbandry. Yet it may show nothing for it, being what the poet calls *ingrata arena.*

In point of fact there are no calls that the natural heart of man is so disposed, so certain to rebel against as those of gratitude. He will be a debtor, a slave, under any tyranny or oppression, rather than be bound to be thankful. The greater the kindness, the more spontaneous, the more costly, the more intolerable will be the weight of it to the receiver if he be a man of common earthly mould. From the moment he has received it he will set about to devise some wretched pretence for ridding himself of the sense of obligation. Almost any ache or pain would he prefer to that long agony. It will be enough that the benefactor betrays that he remembers what he has done. That justifies not forgetfulness, which is not equal to the occasion, but a positively ill return.

On the other hand, it is certain that all spontaneous kindness is liable to mistakes and imperfections. Benevolence and philanthropy are like the ripe fruit, which is but a stage short of rottenness, and is therefore a nice question. They who are doing what they are not bidden are generally omitting what they are bidden, and misdirecting that stream for which they are charged to find a proper channel. The very fact of a gratuitous act being pleasanter than one that is obligatory should suggest hesitation and scrutiny.

But in this manifest failure of Nature we see the

occasion for Grace, that is, for the Word of God, and for the last consummate manifestation of that Word. At every step of God's extraordinary dealings with His people the appeal has been made to gratitude, each new appeal resting on stronger claims than the last. On every new occasion the result has been the same. In this one matter, man, who can rise to the skies, and share with redeemed saints their special felicity, can sink below the level of the poor brutes, who at least know their masters and exchange signs of friendly recognition. Therefore is the Bible addressed to the few who can be grateful, and the sense of gratitude is itself the Word in the hearts of those who admit it.

XLVI

SENSATIONALISM

It may be a relief to my readers as well as to myself if I somewhat change my note. I have been dwelling on the sense of duty as the Word of God, prompting us, warning us, guiding us onwards upon the rugged path that leads to Heaven. Many readers will say they hardly want to be told this, and some will say that duty ought to lead to future happiness, for it is but ill-rewarded in this world. I turn to a livelier strain and a brighter theme.

This is the Sensational. Were one to judge from the abundance of the supply—at least, the attempts to supply—this is the great demand of the age. It is that which quickens the senses, and makes them transmit livelier and stronger reports to the brain, making all the receptive and rational faculties do their work more vigorously and cheerfully. It is assumed that now, more than ever, man is apt to flag, to droop, to doze, to stagnate, indeed to fall out of his lofty position as the earth's lord and master. War used to set this right ; but peace was not behindhand. It is evident

that all antiquity—Jew, Greek, Roman, and outer barbarian—was full of life, though difficult, hazardous, and sometimes very precarious. People had not to go much out of their way in quest of sensation. Yet I question whether Shakespeare or Milton would have known what we understand by Sensation. The word itself is not good Latin. The nearest warrant for it that I know is the word *sensatus*, which means a man quick of sight and hearing, which military service would make him.

About two hundred years ago the word 'sensation' was adopted to signify the leading idea of a new philosophy, anti-Platonic, and, as its opponents thought, anti-Christian, laying the foundation of all thought, feeling, and goodness in sense, and leaving God out of the question. 'Sensation,' thus newly coined and issued at a fixed value, soon lost all precise significance, and now has not at all an irreligious character. But good people, and wise people, do not like either the word or the thing. They look upon sensationalism as some others do on strong drink, and think it only stirs you up to let you down lower and duller than you were before. As I must give the preference to the regular order of things, and to quiet ways, and the golden mean, so I must regard with suspicion all extraordinary methods, as sensational methods are; but I must also admit that, if a man flies away from the dull routine of duty and seeks to be more his own master, he is pursued by the Word as the fugitive

Jonah was, sensationalism itself sending him back to his right course.

Human life—I might say all human life—has its cheerfulness, its sweetness, its brilliancy, its glory, its successes, its triumphs, its surprises, its promises, its fulfilments, its gaieties, its happy beginnings, its happy endings, its dramas, its feasts and festivals, its celebrations, its magnificent scenes, its daily and yearly succession of grand spectacles on earth, and sea, and sky; sun, moon, and stars all telling of their Maker.

No child can be so lost, overlooked, outcast, or buried alive out of sight but that it sees something of a glory and a goodness. Whether in the green fields, or in the closest, darkest, and dirtiest court of a manufacturing town, a child will be found to know more of the grand progress in motion all around it than they can imagine who take no trouble to inquire. What else is this than the Word of God pervading all human society, and telling the dullest, darkest, and loneliest soul of a great work going on, a drama of all ages, embracing all this world, and, for aught we know, other worlds, and others still.

If our poor children are no longer allowed to read the Bible, and our well-to-do children have no wish to read it, indeed, have little opportunity, the ubiquitous newspaper now found in every cottage and poor house in the country is perhaps a fair and not necessarily injurious substitute. It supplies extraordinary incidents for miracles; orators, agitators, and reformers

for patriarchs, judges, and prophets; unaccountable impulses for inspiration; sentimentalism for high morality; and the unknown recesses of our metropolis or any foreign city for Egypt and Syria. The daily course of human affairs, as it may be read in the columns of the press, can save any mind from settling in its lees, and give it the inflation requisite for an ascent to some higher region.

But can the child put together the parts of this grand unity? Can it array the personages, group the incidents, marshal the processions, penetrate the mystery, disentangle the plot, anticipate the climax or the catastrophe as may be? Does the ordinary nature dream dreams and see visions? Is it not rather apt to content itself with briefer and baser joys? Does it seek to thread the story of human life, and to see whence and whither tends the current of human affairs? The answer is to be found in one of the most conspicuous, and as some say the most lamentable facts of this present age. That is the universal rage for sensational narratives, whether historical or not, whether of the present day, and of our own country, or of all times and places.

The very clever gentlemen who have taken charge of the education of this country, who scheme examinations, give subjects, select books, ask questions, and appraise the answers, are doing their very best to granulate all human knowledge into pellets denoting names, places, dates, quantities, and whatever else can be got

by counting, measuring, weighing, and like mechanical tests. The labour is exhaustive, and the result unsatisfying. In such particulars it is not easy to find that which can work any mighty or even pleasant change in the youthful mind. Whether victorious or defeated, whether at the head of the list or nowhere in it, the candidate takes the earliest opportunity to find relief in some volume which may or may not be historical, which is marked with an absence of method, but which shall enthral the attention, excite the curiosity, fire the imagination, and stir up the innermost and deepest feelings. The interest of all such volumes proceeds on the assumption of a world and a state of society far brighter, fuller of incident, and with much more wonderful events than that which we find so safe and so dull in our own well-furnished houses, and on our own well-swept pavements, and our own well-mown lawns. The personages we are thus introduced to by the sensational novel are evidently born to figure on the great stage of this world, if not to conduct its relations with another. They start into life; they are brilliant and warm-blooded; they have visions; they are charged with awful secrets of state, or of some other craft, and it is quite our own fault if we do not feel ourselves a step higher in the universal scale after being an hour or two in their company.

Such is the sensational novel, which, if not quite an invention of this age, is an old invention on a

rather exaggerated scale. Old-fashioned people may not like it, but they have to consider the new disease that seems to demand this special remedy, a disease certainly that would be so called by any old Christian or Pagan philosopher. What is it ?

A scientific and philosophical generation, armed with imperial powers, is doing all it can to convert our free-born children into so many soulless puppets content to find in this world all they can possibly desire. Nature herself revolts. The intended victim of the experiment only recoils still further into the regions where feeling and fancy lead the way, and people the air with humanities of every imaginable kind, agreeing only in the common protest against a dull secularism. May we not say that even in a land of dreams, and where truth itself has only a secondary place, the Word of God is still heard, and still proclaims that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God ?

XLVII

LOGOS—FELLOWSHIP

THE Word, or *Logos*, is not a title of God. It is something in the nature of conversation, or communion, between God and man, or rather between God and all other intelligent beings. We do not call a man reason, or reason a man, though man would be nothing without reason, nothing without conversation. Conversation, worthy to be called conversation, may be carried on for many purposes—for the management of a State, a household, or a business. A controversy is a conversation, so is a trial in a Court of Law, so is a debate in Parliament, so is a discussion on any artistic or engineering question. Ladies have sometimes a good deal to say—very necessary in their case, and sometimes worth listening to—on dress, or on questions of society. Solitary people and shy people have to do a great deal of this conversation either in their own family circle, where it is apt to become dictation rather than conversation, or in their own brains, where it is apt to become idiotical. The maunderings of a moody person by

his own fireside frequently become unsound and unwholesome.

Now what are the ends of conversation, and what is it that gives so great advantage to members of society—society religious, political, literary, æsthetic, or even simply convivial? They learn propriety, proportion, harmony, fitness, utility, common sense, moderation, good sense, good taste, good manners, good humour, and all the unambitious forms of goodness and truth. Of course I am taking for granted that the basis of the supposed society is not very narrow, and that it is not founded on impiety, tyranny, injustice, or wickedness. I am also supposing a man to take his place in society on something like equal terms, and to sacrifice some of his position, and of his self-esteem. Without that sacrifice no man can expect social intercourse to be anything more than a name, as far as he is concerned.

Now what is the expected and proper working of social intercourse, on a proper footing, and on a sufficiently wide scale? I will beg to remind my readers that I am not travelling beyond the four corners of my brief, for in the New Testament there is a good deal in favour of freedom of speech, freedom of manner, thought, and action, constant readiness to afford and to receive explanation, and much that makes what is called a 'good fellow' in these days. On the other hand, there is much in the whole Bible to warn us that a man shut up in the

enjoyment of his power, his glory, his money, his land, and his crops, and thereby losing touch with his neighbours, high or low, is apt to get altogether out of his reckoning, and come to some sore mishap.

It is not good for a man to be alone in his estimation of his own consequence, or good sense. Wrapt in his own thoughts, and jealous of interference, human or Divine, he is apt to run into any excess or defect. He will be extravagant or mean, or both; he will conceive grand ideas that nobody thanks him for, and that cannot be carried out. He will offend alike with magnitude and with pettiness, and will lay down rules that he can get nobody to observe. His creations will suppose impossible inhabitants, and be therefore utterly useless. For instead of laws that work fairly well, he will impose laws that never work at all. If such be his greater failures, his lesser disagreements and mistakes are infinite.

What a man is in his earthly relation he is also in his heavenly. The reserved, unsocial man is reserved with his Maker. In fact he knows not the Word of God flowing freely between God and man. Without perceiving it, he is always dictating, that is, informing the Almighty what He is, and what He ought to do, especially to one so worthy of His high consideration. His own ideas and plans are too good and too important to appear capable of improvement or revision. That is certain. But a

due appreciation, and fortunate circumstances, are good for something, at all events worth asking for. What is the result of such egotism? The answer is, monstrosities, absurdities, follies, and a succession of downfalls. Such a being, such a man, is as much out of the Word of God as he can himself contrive to be. He cannot wholly, for the Word pierces everywhere, between the joints of the strongest harness. It is a consuming fire where necessary. It confounds the mightiest, the strongest, the wisest, and even the dearest, and those most after God's own heart. It penetrates the man that for a brief hour can elevate himself above his Lord, and think to make himself impervious to reason and rebuke.

The Word of God is as the works of God. It comes to us through them, for they are the pictures that inform us, the writing on the wall that reminds us, haply in time, of our approaching doom. But the works of God are the perfection of harmony, fitness, utility, and comeliness in its boundless variety. In Nature everything is good in its way. Everything has its best shape, colour, form, dimensions, and appliances. Everything has a charm of its own, and could not be mended. In vain should we attempt to improve the smallest, the meanest, the least beautiful creature. We could not suggest an improvement either in the world or in any one of its inhabitants. Order, reason, wisdom, or what else we may call it, dominate, as far as we know, from Pole

to Pole. True, Nature is sometimes made the medium of terrible visitations on a national scale. But that only serves to remind us that Nature, that is the material world, is something more than Nature, for through it comes to us the Word of God, which much more concerns us.

XLVIII

ENTERPRISE

AFTER duty comes enterprise, taking many forms, such as movements, crusades, revivals, deliverances, reformations, revolutions, and restorations. They can seldom claim so sure a basis in the Word of Truth, and so unquestionably divine a character, as the humbler and more universal forms of duty. So long as a man is doing what has evidently come to him by some necessity, and the propriety of which cannot be easily questioned, he is accepting, doing, and teaching the Word of God. When he steps out of that line, and undertakes what is plainly, and indeed ostentatiously, his own choice, and believed to be honourable on that very account, the claim to be God's Word will require some proof. Such titles as the Word of God, or the Work of God, imply an appeal to the Author of the Word or Work. A very large part of mankind have to go on continually, giving all their strength and time to the same hard and cheerless sort of work as their fathers did before them. In a few years they become bound to the employer, to the locality, to the same unvarying round,

for they cannot now do anything else, or form new acquaintance. Surely what they must do in order to discharge their domestic duties, must be also the Word of God. To the greater part of mankind this regular round of duties—sometimes very slavish, sometimes very free—is the order in which the Word of God comes to them as a rule and pattern of life. It is the class of life in which our Lord Himself was pleased to illustrate the reception of Divine commands and the obedience of man to his Heavenly Father. Many saints have desired it, or at least have felt its blessedness. In all times there have been instances of good men resigning high positions and the grander spheres of usefulness, and taking for life the lowest rank in their Master's service, and the lowest seat at His table. It cannot, however, be disguised that even this abnegation, being a wilful change of posts, is rather enterprise than duty. It is leaving a difficult post for one supposed to be lighter.

Enterprise, in its many and varied forms, is the leading, and certainly the most prominent, part in the world's activity. History, from national events down to the incidents of daily life, is to us the Word of God continually teaching us, persuading us, and forming us, by a constant succession of striking lessons adapted to our capacity and measure. The short and simple annals of any perfectly private life can teach but a few, and often fail to impress even those few as they ought. But for that very reason the

course of human affairs needs the intervention of enterprise, and invokes it. Things are sure to go wrong. Duties are neglected. The pushing and the strong will oust the weak from their right. So many, so constant, and so insidious are the powers of iniquity and the forces of decay, that Time itself may be called a social as well as elemental destroyer. The very people who stand up for order are often its most potent enemies when they gain by letting things take their own way, or by winking at profitable sin. Duty is apt to become a helpless virtue, requiring the aid of enterprise, which, under the circumstances, becomes duty and takes its place.

The Bible, the truest record of human affairs, is the great inculcator of duty and encourager of enterprise. Its legislative systems are of a very decided character, and cannot be said to be short of detail in either the old or the new Dispensations, but they proceed on the simplest lines of duty. Of the duties which are supposed to be natural—that is, taught by Nature herself—and almost instinctive, not one is omitted, not one is superseded, not one is countervailed, unless it be by most exceptional causes and circumstances. Duties are laid down for the protection and for the repression of all classes, perhaps more for the benefit of the poor than of the rich, who are assumed to be able to take care of themselves. Duty supplies the opening scene of most of the narratives, and the heroes of every drama. They who rebel against the

ordinances of nature and the necessary demands of civilised society, find themselves sternly rebuked in many a page of Holy Writ. Yet when we rise a little from the ground and survey the story—indeed the stories of the Bible—from an elevation sufficient to command the scope and the design, we behold a series of grand enterprises, vastly exceeding in interest to the human race all that other records can offer. All the fortunes of humanity, whether for this or any other world, are exhibited at stake, in this issue or in that, and there is always forthcoming the captain, the lawgiver, the saviour, the deliverer, in typical form, or in the glorious reality. The sacred history is seen to be a series of enterprises—nay, rather one great enterprise—including all that we know or ever can know of man, and how much more it passes man to know, or even safely to conjecture.

So while the Word of God reaches the greater part of mankind as the teacher, and sweetener, and purifier of duty, exalting the humblest offices of daily life into the services of angels, not less does it call the warm heart, the glowing spirit, the keen intellect, to noble deeds and honourable enterprise on the larger scale of human action. The Word of God is heard in the trumpet voice of the reformer, in the indignation of the patriot, and, not the least, in the measured utterance of the statesman repressing vain hopes, inculcating to all justice and mutual generosity, and teaching all that the social fortress is never so secure

as when all may claim to have had a hand in its construction.

The Word of God is certainly to be seen, heard, and felt in all political action, as well as in the systematic prosecution of the claims of humanity, whatever they be. As no cause can prosper unless the Word of God be in it, so may and must everybody who is concerned in these matters ask for the inspiration necessary for so exalted a post. Without that Word the sense of duty sleeps and is forgotten ; enterprise becomes a selfishness, if not a knavery also, and all the forces that should quicken and direct human actions, whether in the humblest or the loftiest scale, become the instruments of mutual destruction and dishonour. So far as regards many of its politic and economic ordinances, the Law of Moses was a predestined failure—much in the same way as an egg has to be broken before the bird can make its appearance. The Promised Land would have had to be distended to many times its size, and the neighbouring countries invaded, conquered, and annexed all round before the children of Israel could be accommodated, had they earned the assistance of heaven by a faithful observance of the Law. By their own abandonment of their high position, and by their own unbrotherly dissensions, they gradually ceased to have either the power or the numbers to occupy all the land given them. Most of them lost even the continuity of the inheritance which formed an actual link

between the Primeval Word and the humblest village in the Promised Land. The narrow lines of local and national duty could no longer be observed, and a world-wide enterprise took its place. The Word of God entered at once into His Temple and the whole world.

In proportion to the freedom, the spaciousness, and the exaltation of enterprise, so are its dangers. It is always on the point of collision with duty, which, if not an antagonist, may be a drag on its wheels. It pleads high warrant for setting aside the calls of duty. It is still more likely to clash with the higher calls of Heaven itself, and to interpret those calls in its own favour. Running, as it supposes, on heavenly lines, it may run parallel, as the false may run parallel to the true, and never converge. Duty has many ties, enterprise few. Duty links self with very many other selfs, all receiving their life and guidance from the one Fount of spiritual life. Enterprise is apt to begin and end with self, knowing no other object, source, or centre. True, it boasts a divinity of its own, but it is in a heaven to be disposed of at its will, and a deity obedient to its principles and its convenience, tamed, exhibited, and kept within due bounds. The chief of a great enterprise is such a deity in himself that he cannot persuade himself to require any other. When he turns he sees around him his own shadows and satellites. The machinery of agitation and administration occupies his senses, his intellect, and his heart, and his own natural self is lost in a mechanical

self, which can only boast colossal dimensions. This I say of all the vast organisations, of all manner of purposes, that are the pride of this age. But I have to acknowledge that they are as much a necessity as the toil of our first parent under the primeval curse, and that the Word of God follows them yet as it did the survivors of the Deluge and the builders of Babel.

Early in this century, old-fashioned people were very slow to see a Divine command in any kind of enterprise. All schemes of emigration, and even of home migration, they met with the promise, that if the poor dwelt in the land they would be fed. They had only to open their Bibles, which they did not as often as they were bound to do, and they might have found that sacred history records a succession of movements, ending in a final and worldwide dispersion, making the Jews everywhere the heralds of that Deliverance they had rejected at home. No country has so worldwide a destiny as ours ; none so committed to enterprise as the only extrication from their home difficulties. Events to which ourselves have contributed, and events beyond our control, alike drive us from our too dear, too enjoyable homes, and compel us to see that all the earth is the country of the Englishman. Such is the Word of God to him in this matter.

XLIX

FICTION

I MUST return to fiction. How stands it to the Word and what relation has the Word to it? Fiction has in all ages had a chief place in education and in the formation of ideas. We begin with nursery tales; from infancy we are amused with toys, which are fictitious persons and things; the greater part of the books taken down from the shelves of our public libraries are works of fiction; the wisest and best men read them, and feel under great obligation to them. Sometimes a book of pure fiction, and no doubt containing much exaggeration and distortion, will so possess the mind of a whole nation that it would be simply waste of time to say a word against it, unless one could manage to make the criticism as interesting as the book itself, which might not be an easy task. But I think that to most minds there will seem a wide interval, a kind of incompatibility, between novels and the Word—the Word of Truth. There are, however, novels and novels. There are novels that profess to amuse only and avow indifference to any other effect. Of course a novelist, a

story-writer, a play-writer, a poet, and almost any writer, must amuse, for if he fail of that he will do nothing else.

But if I am to find a satisfactory answer to the question, What have novels and plays to do with the Word? I must look for more than amusement in them. In the first place they can be criticised, and they are criticised. They can be compared with the ideas of truth, justice, propriety, decency, probability; with the dictates of nature and common sense, and with the rules of good taste. As all these may be called the functions and prerogatives of the Word, then any fair criticism of a work of fiction will be a reference to the Word. It need not be expressly so. Indeed, it will never be. But, nevertheless, when a man sits down to find excellences or failings in a novel or play, he is, without knowing it, God's advocate, with the Word for his text-book. If he sets about this work seriously, and attempts to extend the question so as to embrace all fiction, he will find that the Word has in all ages taught men through that very thing.

Primeval legends are generally more or less fictions. The great nations of antiquity that had the start of Greece, that, in fact, were ancient peoples before the Greeks were a people at all, had very grand religious ideas not so very far from the truth, if too pompous and elaborate, as was likely with powerful, wealthy, and idle priesthoods. The Greeks turned everything into

fable, and even at a time which we regard as a remote antiquity, dealt as freely with gods and goddesses as they did with heroes, heroines, men, women, birds, and beasts. For a long time Greece was in this curious position, that a man might invent anything about a god or a goddess, but he must not question their real existence, or their character, such as it might be.

The inner and irrepressible sense of One God over all testified both for and against all these lesser divinities. Thus there arose a select circle of religious philosophers who could not practise this prevailing duplicity, but who believed in the reality of One True God, yet had to serve the idea of many. What they did hold with regard to these fabulous personages is a most interesting matter of inquiry, affecting both history and the nature of the human mind, but it certainly pointed to the conclusion that there were really no such beings at all. Some said that they personified nature; some referred them to day and night, morning and evening and noonday; some to the astronomic calendar. But there was every likelihood that every one of these deities, once imagined, received much ornament and much addition to his story from passing events. This process went on continually, and the most popular classical dictionary in my own school days is disfigured, indeed, disgraced, by an immense quantity of foolish details all invented by a very low class of writers about, and even long after, the Christian Era.

Of course these men did not believe a word they wrote, and were only pandering to a vicious taste. But, as the Word of God is everywhere, in the most secret recesses of the darkest mind, so it is in the worst page of the worst author. A man cannot blaspheme God or misrepresent Him without using His name, and suggesting the question whether there be a God of Truth.

No work of fiction will be read unless it be to some extent conformed to nature, evident facts, and common experience. A work of fiction expressed with clearness, feeling, and force of imagination, even if its morality be worse than doubtful and its religion none at all, will do more for truth and goodness than many a history, many a biography, many a sermon. If we have to choose between a fictitious character, the like of which never existed and is never likely to exist, and a real person described as he did not exist, there is less direct violation of truth in the former—that is in the avowedly fabulous character—than in the latter, which is a misrepresentation and suppression of truth.

Any book will enfeeble the mind if it be read carelessly and skippingly. That, however, has nothing to do with the matter of the book, for the Bible itself may be read and commented on in a way to do more harm than good. We should not think a neighbour likely to improve us who introduced fifty new topics, as unlike one another as could be, in half that number

of minutes. But that is done when a man simply talks Bible without the least wish to bring it home to the heart and understanding.

It has been said that the popular theology of our time is founded on two works of fiction, 'Paradise Lost' and Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress.' The latter arranges and harmonises into a tale, at least very well told, a vast quantity of Christian ethics, and of characters pictured from a theological point of view. I cannot myself credit it with much of the Christian profession of our day. People may have read every page of the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' or say they have, and yet remain as unlike the Pilgrim as can be—in fact, be more worldly than even the run of worldly people. Perhaps it was enough for them to admire the Pilgrim and then part company for life.

'Paradise Lost' stands on incomparably higher ground, but it is simply an epic poem on the ancient model, classic in style and illustration and in the whole design. It fearlessly relates conversations in heaven and in hell before the creation of the world. It makes Satan a divinity—indeed, for what appears, an uncreated divinity, hoping to take God's place in the government of the universe. It borrows from Greek mythology a fall of nine days from heaven to the bottom of hell—an incident that would much puzzle the astronomers of Milton's own time—and it supposes a chaos, not yet visited by the Almighty, still left between hell and paradise. It

cannot be said that Milton has chapter and verse for all this, and they who usually require these credentials are not quite consistent when they take 'Paradise Lost' for a gospel in verse. Yet it can hardly be denied that in spite of the author's many errors and inconsistencies, the Word of God does speak in and through the volume, and that no English education is complete without a study of it.

While Fiction may be called a Divine gift, and certainly brings high testimonials, there may be too much of it, and it may be found to usurp as well as intrude. It is now seriously proposed, and actually attempted, to thrust personality, character, and humanity itself out of history, nay, out of biography also, reserving only a certain dry remainder for evolutionary purposes; and to leave personality and the whole world of moral ideas to the novel reader and writer. One result is, that the philosophical historians of the day find it necessary to sustain their own humanity by devoting a large portion of their time to the reading of novels in all schools and fashions. The arrangement bears a suspicious resemblance to the not uncommon practice of reducing duties to a minimum, and making pleasure the business of life. We shall have to wait for time to show how it works.

L

SOME PROS AND CONS OF FICTION

I MUST again suppose myself asked, 'What has fiction to do with the Word?' Well, fiction is a product of the human mind, professing to deal with free agents, with distinct and marked characters, with good, bad, and indifferent, with right and wrong, with events ordinary or extraordinary, with something like a providential course, with rewards, punishments, beginning and ending, and, above all, with conclusions, climaxes, and catastrophes, taking the place of Divine, and, indeed, of miraculous interference. It is either the Word, or an imitation of the Word, or a foolish and outrageous opposition to the Word, easily exposed as such by anyone bringing the weapons of truth and common sense to the matter. Very good and very able men, besides owning their deep obligations to works of fiction, have not hesitated to ascribe a high spiritual office and dignity to the writers, as fellow-workers in the Gospel. Books have been described as revelations, though written by men who did not believe in any revelation, except of the sort themselves were making.

Such estimates of fiction may seem extravagant, but this is a question of fact. Is it true that fiction is wanted for the good work, and that it does the good work? The answer is obvious. All the ordinary ways in which truth, wisdom, and goodness are to be learnt and acquired are insufficient. They are monotonous and wearisome, clogged with active or passive hindrances. There are, for example, persons who for years will never give the least help to some humble neighbour charged with the heavy responsibility of bringing up an only child. They will observe, and, indeed, comment on the fact that want of society, want of interest, want of young and cheerful surroundings, are yearly telling on the forlorn creature, and, indeed, rendering it more and more uncompanionable. They simply wish it a long way off, and even quarrel with it for being where it is. The earnest, possibly awkward and misdirected efforts of the parent to supply the want of society, may easily afford them some amusement, if only in the contrast with their own happier lot. Set before them the imaginary case of a singular being, so unique that there never could have been any one like him in character, or in occupation, with a child naturally so bright, sympathetic, and vivacious as to defy all the difficulties of its position, and they will begin to feel for both parent and child, and realise the relation. It matters not that the conception and the story founded on it are simply impossible.

Possibilities, indeed, actualities, fail to do this work, so impossibilities may be tried.

In actual life there is so much competition, and the eminence of a few is necessarily so dependent on the backwardness or depression of the many, that people cannot feel as they should the difficulties and mishaps of their neighbours. Still less do they find pleasure in seeing their neighbours advance over their heads. There are no such hindrances to sympathy in novels and stories. You try the personages in a three-volume novel on their own merits, for they are not runners in your race and for your prize. They are like pictures in a gallery. You can indulge in successive emotions, which are an ease and refreshment to your soul, and prove your healthy moral state. You are sufficiently aware that these emotions are rare and difficult in actual life, and therefore you seek them in an imaginary world. It is like a week or two at a cheerful watering-place after many months of work and confinement.

Real life is encumbered and complicated by antecedents and consequences. It compels you to look backwards and forwards and all around. It tempts you to over confidence, or timidity, in your estimate of the next stage of affairs, for in real life the next stage will surely come. It is only a brief episode in a very long history, with all its shades and some of its gleams. On the other hand, the three-volume novel plunges you into the very thick of things, and spares

you the pangs of retrospection and preparation. It brings you to a happy and final conclusion—a marriage, a fortune, a vindication, a conversion, a discovery, a blaze of triumph of one sort or another. You can return and return again to such a train of ideas, each one maturer and happier, up to something which cannot be surpassed. Real life affords but little of the ascending scale, and the complete *éclat*. There always remains a misgiving as to the next stage, for even heroes and heroines cannot be pronounced happy till they die—an event hardly contemplated in the ordinary novel.

I will not dwell longer on the differences between fact and fiction, but as they affect the pretensions of fiction to embody and convey the Word. Space forbids. I have had no choice but to allow fiction a fair hearing, for she brings a *carte* of admission subscribed by all authorities and all ages. She is the most universal of teachers, requiring no titles, no prefixes, no additions, no robe of office or dignity. She has but to speak and she is heard, and a thousand times a thousand listeners and readers are ready to start up and demand for her not only liberty, but privilege, rank, and divine honours.

On reading over what I have written above, I feel that I have been a little carried away by my anxiety to say what can be said for fiction. I have not given due weight to its plain deficiencies in the comparison with fact. In the first place the facts of life, as far as

they concern us and come within our observation or our reading, are Divinely ordered for our instruction, and meted out to us for that purpose. That cannot be said as truly for fiction. In real life we must take persons as they come, and circumstances as they come, and events as they come, though we may not like them or understand them, or think we have any call of duty in regard to them. They present us with real problems, which we have to work out as well as we can. Every day will bring some new social difficulty. A good Christian will say, The Almighty has brought these people and ordained this present occasion, and I must do my best in His service at His call. If there should occur any such feeling when we are reading a novel, it will be in a nugatory form. Again, the order of causes and effects, the antecedents, the consequences, and the moral to be drawn from them are full of meaning and import in real life—false or meaningless in the tale. Real life gives us all sorts. The novelist picks and chooses, sometimes, indeed, hardly exercising the duty of choice at all. Real life sends your eyes a long way backwards, a long way forwards, a long way on all sides, and sometimes into yourself. The story-book or novel gives you pretty pictures on a surface before you. In real life every day leaves many reminders in which the feelings, perhaps the passions and the interests are concerned. The succession of events is infinite, having neither beginning nor end.

You cannot, there, sum up rapidly and dismiss the actors or the motives from your memory and to their respective dooms. Finally, in real life there is always something left to the judgment-seat. Your judgment may be reversed ; you are not to have it all your own way ; the question of the day may be a question still in years to come, still inviting the exercise of a sound judgment. This is done for you and done quick in the novel. In truth, it is not a history as God rules history ; it is a dream and no more. In all realities the great question, the impossible question, is the future. Time is but the seed of eternity. The largest and longest husbandry only leads to harvests yet to come. The fiction has no future, and its golden promises are an empty jest. When the happy pair are duly installed in the ancestral hall even the audacious novelist leaves them to take their place among vulgar mortals. He has done his best for them, and it is their fault if they cannot proceed on such excellent lines. The reader can only share his hopes, but if they fail it cannot matter, for there are no such persons, and it is vain either to hope or to fear for them.

LI

WISDOM

I STILL hear the protest, Why attempt to take simple and half-educated Christians back to heathen philosophy? Why tell them that all that antiquated matter has to be known in order to a just understanding of a Christian doctrine? My answer is that, if anyone will take Christ as He presents Himself in the New Testament to humble and loving souls, that is enough. But the world does not think it enough. An active and powerful part of the world is busily employed in trying to persuade the rest that there is no such thing as the Gospel, and no such person as the Christ we suppose, and that the whole affair is a foolish legend, like mediæval saints and their miracles; and that science, or thought, or enlightenment, or civilisation —or march of mind, as it was called in my younger days—has proved all these stories to be old wives' tales. The doctrine, not of the Church of England only, or of the Church of Rome, but of most of the English denominations, is openly challenged by some who tell us it is half Judaism, half Paganism—both

of them impostures from the beginning, and now quite exploded.

Believers have to admit a good deal, so they had best know their ground, what they are admitting and what they must stand to. It is very true, and may be not only admitted, but proclaimed from the house-tops, that by the Divine Wisdom and Goodness both God's own people and the heathen were prepared for their common Master and Saviour. The service of the Tabernacle and of the Temple, a series of miracles and revelations, and the voice of prophecy, prepared God's own people for their Messiah. If we date, as we ought to do, from the call of Abraham, this preparation took two thousand years. If we date, as we might think it more historically safe to do, from the institution of the law through Moses, it took about fifteen hundred years—that is, about as long a period as has elapsed since our wise and good masters, the Romans, said good-bye to the Britons, and left them to fight it out with Picts, Scots, and all sorts of troublesome folks, till the Saxons kindly came to their aid. The preparation described in the Old Testament had many stages and long interruptions.

On the other hand, the immediate preparation of the Greeks, by means of a sound and pure philosophy, took about five hundred years—a little more or a little less, as people may choose to reckon it. The Children of Israel were coming back to the Holy Land from their captivity, and the Restoration had set in,

when the Greeks, too, were delivered from their old dread of Oriental dominion, and were what is called flourishing at home—indeed, dreaming of empire. That deliverance, and the freedom with which they could now communicate with the East, brought to them also new philosophical ideas, and led them to think less of their own idolatrous superstitions. Every educated Greek paid visits to Egypt.

More than three centuries before Christ, Alexander the Great overran all that part of the world with his victorious arms, and conceived the idea of a universal empire, the seat of which should be one of the seven mouths of the Nile. He converted an old port into the great city of Alexandria. This he peopled with a hundred thousand Jews, who already looked to him as the conquering Ram in Daniel's prophecy. Conquerors are apt to be liberal in their opinions, for it is their best policy, and Alexander promised the Jews the free exercise of their religion. His successor on the throne of Egypt was his half-brother, Ptolemy, a very great man—indeed, in some respects, a greater man than Alexander. He brought over another immigration of Jews, and founded a great library to make Alexandria the resort of scholars from all nations. His son and successor had the Jewish Scriptures translated into Greek, then the only universal language. This is the Septuagint, which our Lord often quoted, and which is quoted altogether about two hundred times in the New Testament.

For three centuries the Alexandrian Jews met with much variety of treatment, according to the humour or the convenience of the Ptolemies, and had to contend earnestly for their faith. All that time Alexandria, besides being the chief school of learning, was the chief port and the best harbour in the world, with many advantages rarely to be found. All nations flocked thither; streams of traffic, by land and sea, came thither from all the three great continents. From Alexandria Rome received its largest and most unfailing supply of wheat and other grain. There came at last a time when Alexandria seemed likely to wrest from Rome the dominion of the world, and it was only by the issue of the battle of Actium, thirty-one years before the Birth of Christ, that this hope was finally extinguished.

For a long period the Jews of Alexandria were a much larger, wealthier, and better-educated population than the Jews of Jerusalem. Like all educated people on the shores of the Mediterranean, they had Greek education. They found in the philosophy of Plato the nearest approach the world could make to their own idea of the one true God in actual intercourse with His people. Instead of the word *Logos*, they used the word 'Sophia,' or Wisdom. Scholars of the Alexandrian School wrote several works which show a strong desire to reconcile the Jewish faith with Greek philosophy. Two of these works used to be included in the Bible, and are so still by the

Church of Rome. Our reformers placed them in the Apocrypha, upon some particular grounds of objection, but the Church of England still regards them as profitable reading, and portions are still read in our churches.

In these books, wherever you come to the word 'Wisdom,' it is the substitute, or Jewish version, of Plato's *Logos*. It means more than philosophy, more than wisdom, more than goodness, for it means God in our hearts and minds—prompting us, guiding us, helping us towards goodness, and finally making us wise and good. Jew and Greek saw alike that they could not comprehend the Almighty, or conceive His form of being and mode of operation; but they could and did see, hear, feel, enjoy, and be thankful for what He did, and to do this was Wisdom, or the *Logos*.

Now I should be but a lame and feeble expounder both of Greek philosophy and of Divine truth. But, if I were ever so clear and bright, and ever so interesting, I feel sure that by this time my readers will often have said to themselves, 'Surely all this information and talk is hardly necessary to the understanding of the great truth preached to babes and sucklings?' But Christians are not allowed to be babes and sucklings in these days. On the one hand, the Church compels them to say what they cannot understand; and, on the other hand, they can hardly go into a public-house without hearing the

truths they have been taught from the cradle openly scoffed at.

In this chapter I have simply attempted to show how the Almighty prepared the whole world—Jew and Gentile—for the reception of His only Son, their common Lord and Saviour. The preparation was very different, for the cases and circumstances were very different. But let me remind my readers that there is not in the four Gospels a single word of disparagement for the philosophy of the Greeks ; while in the writings of St. Paul the Greek philosophy condemned is not that of Plato, but of very different kind of men, who wished to believe in nothing but earthly things, or in a blind—indeed, unjust and cruel —necessity.

LII

GREEK AND JEWISH SENSES

I HAVE now to make a confession which some will think candid and ingenuous, others shameful—indeed, shameless. It is that I think it quite possible I have not been consistent in my explanation of the word *Logos*. I can, at least, plead that I have very little help from the great authorities of the Christian Church—indeed, that they rather warn me not to touch the word. The Greek philosophers used it with some varieties of meaning. So, too, did the early Christian Fathers. As for the later Christian Fathers, they had very animated controversies on one or two points. As for modern divines, they avoid the question rather than deal with it. They just charge stupidity or malice on those who cannot understand them, and then run away. That I am not the man to undertake difficult theological work I have been told more than once, and freely admit. It is not for want of giving sufficient time to the questions surrounding the so-called doctrine of the Trinity, for I have been pondering over them seventy-five years, sometimes very anxiously. The Church, it is true, has gone on

long without an accurate or unanimous judgment upon them, and some argue that she may as well go on longer. I think, however, that they have to be undertaken, and at my time of life I naturally wish to see the work begun.

The history of the word *Logos*, since it was finally stamped with a Divine significance, is unique and almost incredible. For centuries it was the very centre of a controversy—worse than controversy—that split up the Church, and caused innumerable scandals. As most of the disputants were philosophers as well as theologians, and the Greek language was either their mother-tongue or part of their early education, it might be expected that they would arrive at some common understanding as to the meaning of the word, and bequeath that explanation to posterity. On the contrary, they ended with shutting the word *Logos* out of the Creeds altogether. What is called the Nicene Creed is the oldest and nearest approach to agreement between the churches. The word is not there. It has very little place in the history of the Reformation. It does not occur in our Book of Common Prayer, except in the readings from St. John; for the 'holy Word'—the 'true and lively Word' mentioned thrice in the prayer for the Church Militant, is not the *Logos* of John i. 1—at least is not generally so explained or understood.

In the Thirty-nine Articles, the second is headed 'Of the Word, or Son of God, which was made very

Man.' The Article itself says, 'The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father,' &c. The statement that the Son is the Word, and that the Word is a title of the Son, is very far from expressing the whole teaching of Scripture on the Word. But even this single introduction of the *Logos* into the formularies of the Church of England is for the clergy, not the laity, and is only heard in the church on the occasion of a newly-inducted incumbent 'reading in.' There was an opening for the introduction of the word in the collect for St. John the Evangelist, but in place of it the idea of Light, which occurs twice in the old collect in the Sarum Missal, is here repeated four times. It is noticeable that in the Sarum Missal the 'Office' for the day and the First Lesson are both from Ecclesiasticus, on the Divinity of Wisdom. But the writings of the Greecised Jews found no favour with our Reformers.

It thus appears that *Logos*, after being much and warmly discussed in the three or four first centuries of the Church, was allowed to drop out of notice altogether, on having done its work as the necessary step in a great argument. That argument was conducted, it was supposed, in true logical fashion. The Word, it was said, is God, and Jesus Christ is the Word; Jesus Christ, therefore, is God. I cannot believe that to have been St. John's meaning, nor can

I think the matter is one for logical treatment. The above pretended syllogism will not stand any logical test. Yet I should advise any ordinary Christian to beware of disputing it, for he may easily stumble into much worse error, if error there be. But I foresee that the great controversies of the Primitive Church are soon to be revived, and I accordingly warn everybody who can to prepare for it. Otherwise he may find himself betrayed or surprised into saying things which he cannot stand to. It is a great consolation to me to believe all controversialists, whether ancient or modern, much more agreed than they think, and that it is possible for there to be very different expressions of the same truth.

The different meanings of the word *Logos* were pronounced and sharply defined long before the days of St. John—indeed, centuries before. In all their religious conceptions the Greeks and the Jews started very differently. The Greeks had no idea of Divine unity, or of one creative act, or of one Divine government, except as theories, which they did not venture to act upon, or to entertain seriously. They borrowed religious ideas and systems, and gods and goddesses, from all nations. They ascribed different powers and different characters to their divinities, and, as it happened, the particular god of whom they asked advice, or insight into the future, was not the Father of gods and men, but another, whom they invested with very bad qualities, making him malicious, vindictive, and

cruel. All the Greek philosophers rendered outward homage to all these divinities, and, like other people, consulted the oracles. But it is plain that they had little respect for these oracles, thinking them apt to be blind and even corrupt, which no doubt they were.

The natural consequence was that the Greeks, while they thought much of the relations between man and certain higher powers, did not think of a Supreme Being, spontaneously, regularly, and continually acting upon the soul of man and moving it to goodness and truth. The feelings and operations of the human mind they regarded much as our modern philosophers do, viz. as man's own creating. That the human mind could and did imagine one Supreme God they could not deny, for it was the fact; but they set it down rather as a discovery of the reason, or a sublime speculation, than as a reality. Yet, as long as the two sets of ideas—the human and the Divine—could be set one against the other, there was hardly room for invention, perhaps even discovery. So, in Greek hands, *Logos* was more of earth than of heaven, more human than Divine. It spread itself over the field of thought like a mist, and neither concentrated itself nor cleared. It might, indeed, tend upwards and one-wards; but in the Greek *Logos* the human element predominated, and the Word was a human conception of the relation of man to God.

It is the very contrary in the Jewish *Logos*. From the beginning it is one simple idea—the all-powerful

Word of God creating all things, conversing with man, giving him ordinances, punishing him, offering to him the hope of restoration, pronouncing sentence on the old world, carrying that sentence out, but reserving one family and entering into covenant with it, calling Abram from Ur and from Aram, settling him in the midst of rebellious races, entering into close and exclusive relations with his family for many centuries and through the greatest variety of circumstances, giving a code of laws to be strictly observed and promises liable to forfeiture; choosing one city, one priesthood, one dynasty, resulting in a oneness of character the like of which is not to be found in any other history. Everything here comes from God —One God; and man is passive as regards action, and barren as regards invention. There is neither free choice nor free thought here, for God alone was to be believed, and God alone to be obeyed. Every good gift, every good thought, every good feeling, was from heaven.

A Jew could never think as a Greek did, or a Greek as a Jew; for, as the Greek saw things, the whole course of human affairs was upwards; as the Jew saw them, it was downwards—that is, from God to man. To the Jew the Word meant command; to the Greek it meant a grand idea, commending itself to a fine intellect and a religious disposition. The Jewish *Logos* required little or no explanation, and could be apprehended by everybody capable of doing

what he was told to do. The Greek *Logos* had to be vindicated by hard logic and adorned with eloquence, and even so might and did fail to win the critical and the fastidious.

When Jew and Greek at length found their respective anticipations fulfilled in Christ, and that He was the Word of God and the highest wisdom of man, then they seem to have changed places, at least as far as religious practice went. The Greek accepted the doctrine simply, and held himself thereby saved. The Jew held himself bound to give many proofs of his faith. Receiving his faith as a precious boon from God, he doubted not that he had to fulfil conditions. In process of time Jew and Greek understood one another better, though differences remained ; and by the time they had agreed on a universal Confession of Faith, they seem also to have come to a common understanding to let the word *Logos* drop out of worship and controversy. I began this chapter with telling my readers I was about to be very frank with them. Perhaps they will now observe that I have at least kept my word with them. But I will ask my readers also to allow that the difference between Jew and Greek never did come to very much; for whichever way the Jew thought on the matter, and whichever way the Greek, it was all the work and Word of One God in their respective hearts and understandings.

LIII

JEW AND GREEK

I AM not merely going off at a tangent, as all writers are apt to do, when I invite my readers to follow me in a comparison of the Jew and the Greek, and some account of their mutual necessity. I think I have already said that the Jew was nothing without the Greek, and the Greek nothing without the Jew. The combination of the two elements is most beautifully and powerfully illustrated in the character and writings of St. Paul, but most people will regard that as an affair of the individual, not of a whole nation, still less of many nations.

In the first place I must ask a licence. There is a very large literature of speculation on the probable or possible consequence of something having come to pass which did not come to pass, or of something not having come to pass which actually did come to pass. Many great battles, for example, hung in the balance till the merest accident—an arrow, a bullet, a false rumour, or a mistaken order—determined the day and the course of human affairs for a century or more. I offer a subject for a volume, but can only give it a few

pages. What would have become of the Jew if there had been no Greek, and what would have become of the Greek if there had been no Jew? The question subdivides itself, for we may suppose the case of either Jew or Greek appearing and then disappearing off the stage of human affairs.

The Jew represented the simplest, loftiest, and most powerful of all moral forces; the Greek the most perfect of all intellectual activities. The actual difference between Jew and Greek was so great and so defined that it may almost be said whatever one had the other had not. The ubiquitous Jew presented everywhere the longest and best-verified pedigree, the purest blood, the most miraculous history, the most rational ceremonial, the straightest moral law, and the distinctest future.

The Greeks better appreciated what they had in hand, which certainly was worth a struggle. They held the undisputed supremacy in science and art, and in all that can be done by tongue, pencil, or pen. They possessed the very soul of beauty and grace. But they had no real unity; their past was gone never to return; their future was nothing. They had no faith. They had now lost the idea of a fatherland, and, generally speaking, would rather serve at Rome than reign anywhere else, for the yellow Tiber fulfilled to the Greek all his poets had dreamt of the Golden Fleece, and golden sands, and apples of gold. So it was to the Greek, and so it was also to the Jew. This

however, was a matter of private needs, for it cannot be denied that the Jew valued his faith and the Greek his philosophy beyond silver and gold.

In the consideration of either without the other we must give the Jew precedence, for he was a very distinct and important historical character, proud of his antiquity, when the Greek was just beginning to emerge out of the prehistoric man-made chaos of pirates and robbers then making life miserable. There stood the Jew, occupying with fear and trembling, yet somehow with a good conscience, some pieces of waste and corner land between desert, sea, and mountain, constituting at least some natural defence against the greatest empires then in the world. For twelve centuries after our assumed date—that is, after the first appearance of Greek in history—those Israelites did for the most part much as other nations have done. They behaved well, and they behaved ill; they obeyed, and they disobeyed; they were rewarded, and they were punished; they changed their rulers, their system of government, and their public policy; they changed their relations and their occupations; they suffered terrible vicissitudes, and were several times on the point of utter destruction, or at least final dispersion; they could not help largely modifying their laws, their customs, their mode of worship, their language, and even their religious ideas.

But with a tenacity unparalleled in the history of

the world, they held to the one sheet-anchor of their faith, One God ; the God who had made them, preserved them, and often redeemed them ; the God of the universe and of the Holy Land ; the God of all mankind, and of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; the God who daily heard their prayers, and always granted their requests as far as it was good for them ; the God who put His Spirit into their hearts, and would assuredly one day send them a King who would rule the world in peace from the Holy City.

Some of our historical writers discover changes not only in the Jewish worship, but in the Object. They would employ themselves more wisely and profitably in noting what remained the same from age to age when time had done its worst. All history can show nothing to compare with this monumental changelessness of faith and character. The Pharaohs did their best to petrify their subject slaves, and only stopped short of completing that work when they found that statues pay no rents, and tombs afford no basis of taxation. The Copt remains to this day, but what is he in comparison with the Jew ?

Let us suppose that the Greek had succumbed or disappeared in one of his many struggles, or that the Hellenes had become the slaves of their Asiatic instead of their Italian neighbours. In that case can we discover the least possibility of the unchangeable, unaccommodating Jew, with his one article of faith, his bare ceremonial, and his scanty budget of hopes,

all centring in the one chosen race, operating with any success in the spiritual market of the world, and winning, if not souls, at least proselytes and adherents? It is an old joke that the conversion of a single Jew costs 5,000*l.*, which is no sooner secured than the costly article is found to revert to its former owners. On the other hand, no one ever heard of a Jew wishing to convert a Christian, even if five pence would do it. The Jews did indeed tell their wonderful tales to an incredulous world, were well laughed at, and took no offence. Like the prophet who fled from the Divine presence because he saw his errand would do him no good, they were quite ready to let the world go on in its wicked ways. So much for the Jew, had he been left to do the great work alone.

Take now the other alternative—the Greek in single and undisputed possession of the world's ear. If the Jew felt no particular zeal to convert the world, the Greek felt less—in fact, he had nothing to convert the world to. His religious ideas he had long reduced to poetry and sculpture; his dream of a Divine Unity he had left on the shelf among other speculations; his morality he had carefully distinguished from mathematics, but had left dangerously or conveniently near the border line. He had elevated all the virtues into manly accomplishments, generally unattainable by the weaker sex, whom he recommended therefore to keep indoors. He had discovered that he could live well on the products of the intellect

and the fruits of the tongue. These he could turn into money, or realise, as they now say.

All over civilised Europe Greeks were in demand, for they had almost a monopoly of education. Their pliancy resembled that of the French gentleman who on taking charge of a pupil wished to hear at once what religion he was to be taught, 'because,' he added, 'I shall have to learn it myself first, and my rule is to do all my work thoroughly.' The Greeks, in fact, brought nothing but doubt into the subject of religion, and could only regard a belief in One God over all as a clumsy expedient for stopping inquiry, inquiry being the gist of the whole matter. Finally, the Greeks had an utter contempt for all barbarians, and though there was a mystery about the Jew that saved him from that rank, still all were barbarians in their eyes unless they were philosophers and grammarians or conquerors.

Now what could these have done for the human race if the work had been left to themselves? What could they have done? The answer is, Nothing—that is to say, if they were Greeks pure and simple. Happily—providentially rather—now for centuries Jew and Greek had been in friendly communication, learning much from one another, and founding schools and other institutions in which they met daily. They now had an abundance of ideas, feelings, wishes, and plans in common, and each valued highly what the other brought to the common stock. They had also

a common master, and that was the practical, energetic Roman.

There may seem to be something artificial and far-fetched in the notion of two very different characters, unable severally to do anything in a great work, indeed unwilling, but acquiring the will and the power when they were brought together, and changing the very face of the world. But the question is, Has this work been done, and has it been done by this united action of different forces? It is a question of fact, and of the fact I conceive there can be no doubt.

Why should we wish to doubt? The heart of man has always freely adopted the belief that there exists a regular channel of mediation between God and man. It is the head that asks for proof, and the senses for sight and sound. But we have no right to demand proof when there is nothing unusual in the alleged fact. Every member of the human race is individual and singular, and this must be in order that everyone may have that which he can contribute to others, and that for which he is beholden to them in return. Mutual dependence and mutual assistance are universal laws. They are ordinances, necessary the one to the other. The same God creates the demand and the supply, the weak and the strong; and it is the same Word that provides a fitting field and grand occasion for the exercise of virtues which are but the different parts of one Divine patrimony.

LIV

WORD OF GOD AND WORD OF MAN

THOUGH, from the first to the last, the Jew and the Gentile, the Jewish Christian and the Gentile convert, used the word *Logos* very differently, yet they did not use it so differently as to preclude a substantial agreement. The Jews meant by it the Word of the One God, the word of creation, of command, of preservation, of government, the living and continual Word, through which comes every good gift to man. They held, and no doubt many of them felt, that every good thought in their minds, every good intention, every honest motive, every just conclusion was the very act of God in their minds. An unfailing effluence from the Eternal Fount of blessings fertilised, vivified, and filled their whole being. The same Word that created earth and heaven created also every good thing in their souls. This constant flow of life and holiness unto hearts ready to receive it might be administered by angels, prophets, and holy men, but it came direct from God. The Word was in the hearts of God's people, but it was the

Word of God, not in any sense whatever the spontaneous act or working of their own minds.

The Gentiles, on the contrary, had long, and almost wholly, lost the idea of One Almighty God, continually creating, ruling, commanding, and governing men. The Word was not to them the Word of God, simply because they knew not God. They could only speculate on the possibility, and even the probability, of One Divine Power. But they had long revelled in religious and philosophical ideas; multiplying gods and demigods, adding continually to the company of heaven men and women who had little claim to be there in any rank, and crediting their own selves with a kind of divinity. With this abundance of lower beliefs, and this immense confidence in themselves, they had gone on steadily for many generations planning and building systems of philosophy which were to bring them in sight of heaven, and even force an entrance there.

What was the great instrument of this lofty design? It was Thought, as it passed from man to man. No one thought could be put into form and uttered without taking the shape of a word, which would henceforth be identified with it. So *Logos* came to signify both the work of the reason and the work of the tongue. Of course if a man was ever to convert the world, and establish Divine truth on an eternal throne, it could only be by the use of the tongue, or, as we now say, of the pen. All this

went on for many generations, and all over the civilised world, till the philosophic Gentiles began to regard the Word, or perfected reason, as a divinity installed in their own minds and renovating the world.

How, then, could this be reconciled and identified, seeing that the one was the Word of God, and the other the word of man? They were reconciled and identified, though with a difficulty which remains, it may be said, even to this day. Both of these conceptions were in the human mind, and in both there was the admission of a Divine power; in both there was light and life, and the formation of a Divine character. Such an amount of agreement justified Christians in their attempt to bring about a complete reconciliation between heathen and Christian ideas. Nevertheless the work was slow, if, indeed, it has yet been completed.

Before these questions came up the Jews had been entirely weaned of their idolatries and idolatrous worship, and had returned, heart and soul, to the simple faith of their patriarchal ancestors. They now believed in one only God with an intensity for which no parallel can be found in the history of religion. It followed as a matter of course that they could only regard the Word as the Word of God, even when they adopted the Greek equivalent.

On the other hand, the Greeks could never be quite persuaded out of their self-reliance, their grand

discoveries, their beautiful ideas, and their magnificent traditions. They could not wrench from their souls, stamp under their feet, and cast into the brook or the fire the glorious creations of their own fanciful and fertile brains. They were still tied to earth. So still the *Logos*, or Word, in their hearts rather ascended towards God than came down from Him, and was still their own continued act, not His ; it was still the outcome of their own noble and enlightened natures, not the command and gift of the Almighty.

Now I do not say that it is at all a matter of indifference which of these views we take, or that they come quite to the same thing, or that we may combine them, or that we may steer between them ; but I may say that the Almighty framed both these currents of thought and feeling, and that each was due to a wonderful concurrence of circumstances, amounting in each case to a providential education. It is impossible not to regard Greek civilisation as a Divine work, in its way, and as far as it went. The Bible accounts to us for the Jewish nation, system, and faith. History accounts to us for the rapid growth and amazing fabric of the Roman Empire. But unless we admit the Greek civilisation as a special gift from Heaven, I, for one, would not pretend to account otherwise for its origin, and its high and unique place in the history of the world.

The Greek mythology in its purer state, before it became a tree for every evil bird to roost upon, was a

shadowy and fantastic way of describing the very many and various gifts of One Almighty Power. These were the promised land, the heritage, the sacred soil of the Greek race. Mankind has never equalled Greece in its conceptions of beauty, of symmetry, of harmony, of ideal greatness and goodness, of the poetical and the eloquent, of all that adorns cities or relieves the vulgarity of common life. But whatever the possessors of these gifts may think of them, they come from God; they come on a Divine errand, and have a Divine work to perform. They tend to raise man from the slough and mire to which a fallen nature is continually gravitating. But for them the mass of mankind would be brutish, and so content with brutishness as to be irredeemable. They give ideas of loveliness, sublimity, and even of holiness, which can never be realised, and which therefore impel higher natures to sigh, like the world's conqueror, for one world more.

LV

THE JEW, THE GREEK, AND THE ROMAN

BUT I must dwell a little more on the agreement and the differences of the Divine Word and the human word. To repeat what I have said above, we understand by the Divine Word that which comes straight from God, and by the human word that which is, or rather seems, the work of man. The Children of Israel, who were born and bred to act by the word of command, who were under orders from the day Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees to the destruction of Jerusalem, two thousand years after, had to regard all goodness, holiness, truth, and justice as commands. So far they were never out of the nursery, or infant school. They might expect immediate reward if they did their duty, and punishment if they defaulted. They might expect a sterner messenger from on high any day to set them right. All goodness was by authority, and, as we should express it, chapter and verse had to be quoted for every point at issue between the rival sects. Of course their differences, having to be settled by their understanding of doubtful texts, ran into minute points, and became

ridiculous. If anyone will carefully study the history and circumstances of God's people, he will see that all this was a matter of necessity. They could not be left to themselves. They could not be allowed to go from country to country looking for a religious system, or picking up the materials for one. They had not to discover, or invent, or construct, but to keep and defend that which God had given them—the Word, the One Word of life and goodness.

For two centuries before Christ there had been at Alexandria, the chief resort of the Jews after Jerusalem—as I have stated above—a very grand institution, somewhat resembling our great universities, but with a more world-wide character. The Jews were a third of the population of the place, and had more than a third of its learning and cleverness; but they were never for a day won over by the Gentile faiths, schools, and philosophies competing with one another at that great market of intellectual produce. They only gave in so far as to admit, and even believe, that the Word apparent in their Bible from the first verse to the last, and to be read in all its history, all its law, all its worship, and all its prophecy, was, in some true sense, a Person, and the Son of God. But this simple faith left little or no opening for the exercise of intellect. They had to believe and obey. It was quite otherwise with the highly cultured philosophers of the heathen world. They had to abandon faiths instead of clinging to

them ; they had no word of command to depend on and proceed on ; they had to make everything for themselves, instead of finding it ready made, and brought to them, as it is said, by angels from heaven. Hence their Word, or philosophy, was the word of man. The question is, Can these be the same? The answer is, They can, they must be, and they are.

Thus far, under my present heading, I have written as if the Jew and the Greek were the only two races, the only two civilisations, immediately concerned in a comparison of the Jewish and the Greek Word, or *Logos*. The contrast is so great, the direction from above and from below so distinct and clear, the two races and two histories so utterly unlike, yet so fitted for the work they had to do, that one might almost wish to stop here and admit no third factor into the question. But a factor there was, and a very powerful and masterful one. Nor have we any reason to regret it. Both the Jew and the Greek were so obstinate, and so incapable of acting out of their own lines, that theology and philosophy never would have settled their differences but for the intervention of a powerful and peremptory umpire. This was Rome, that had already constituted itself judge of all the earth when the Jews were beginning to study philosophy, and the Greeks to read the Bible. An arbitrator was wanted, and had been prepared. We all know how difficult, how impossible indeed, it is to settle differences and to establish co-operation where

the parties to be brought together are not only different, but the very opposite, in race, in nature, in language, in history, and in present circumstances and expectations. But an arbitrator was now at hand quite equal to the occasion. When Rome had united all the world in a policy of common subjection, mutual forbearance, and mutual aid, it was not likely to see the prize of the whole world slip out of its fingers on a question between a vowel and a diphthong, or between one preposition and another, and if the world would only agree to worship the Roman Emperors, it would not interfere with pious memories and vigorous faiths not much in its way. But Rome had to be created and raised up and educated for this work, and quickly and marvellously was that done.

In the short space of seven hundred years, about the duration of our own Parliamentary system, this power advanced from a Cave of Adullam to the mastery of the known world. Its laws were so just and so well administered, and its political action so fair, that under them our own forefathers acquired the habit of submission and content, and were sorry at last to lose their masters. Rome itself submitted to the Gospel, and, as Christian, governed the greater part of Christian Europe for twelve hundred years, and still governs no small part of it. Was it not Divine Providence, was it not the Word of God, that educated, united, and matured the Roman people? The classic writers indeed expose much that is very

bad in their social condition, but this would have been a universal rottenness but for the saving few, if indeed few they were. Besides much political virtue and much domestic goodness, there were ancient traditions of holiness and reverence and Divine mystery that held their ground at Rome against the invasion of ever-encroaching licence. But the greater the difficulties, the more proved is the goodness that withstands them. I know there are philosophers, theologians, who will say that so long as this goodness was not Christian it was not formal—that is, true—goodness, but only a sort of physical or elemental goodness, like the amiable ways of a thoroughly domesticated cat, or dog, or bird. Whatever the kind of goodness, whatever its place in a philosophical system, I ask, How did it come there at all? Did man ever make himself good? I cannot believe that any goodness which strikes the common sense as real, and that evidently produces the results of goodness, is not real goodness, and, as such, the work and gift of God, as much as any other gift of body or mind the possessor of this goodness may haply enjoy.

But I will take a single act, and I select it because it can be readily compared with several passages in our Lord's teaching. Horace, as in duty bound, transmits to posterity the fraternal love shown by one Proculeius, who, for a second time, divided his patrimony with his brothers, when they had been ruined by the civil wars. Now here was a disposition framed

by the Almighty, circumstances brought about by Him, and the means provided. Can it be denied that He too gave the impulse? But this impulse would be His Word, given through the Word, even though Proculeius himself might suppose it a spontaneous thought from the depth of his own heart.

It would be alike uncandid and irreligious to deny Rome a very large share in the foundation and formation of the Church. Into a strong stock, a vigorous tradition, and a glorious history, she engrafted and assimilated many peoples and races, only less than herself in their political virtues. Such are the usual ingredients of empires. In this way was she qualified for transmitting beyond *Garamantes et Indos* an empire more potent and more lasting than her own. Of all the Powers that have found themselves heirs of Alexander and of Cæsar, England is the one that has been most formed on the broad principles of universal hospitality and common right. So far as regards her political character and her actual dominion, she is now the nation best formed and educated to take the place of the old fostering Powers, and at least lead the way in the extension of Christ's kingdom.

LVI

THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE WORD

CHRISTIANS admit easily, indeed fluently, that God is the same always and everywhere, that so, too, is the Word, and that Jesus Christ is the Word. This seems to bind in one comprehensive unity all the beings capable of knowing God, whatever the difference of place, time, and circumstance, and what are called manners and customs. Nevertheless the very people who so speak will often be found to limit the operation of the Word, as if it could be substantially different in divers places and times, and even wanting altogether over the greater part of the world and of the world's history. It becomes, then, a necessity to assert the universality of the Word, strange as that necessity may be. But it is a melancholy fact that the people who stand up for the Creeds, and most insist on their being forced on infant and uninformed minds, are often found least to understand them. The Bible is distinctively called the Word of God, because from the first page to the last it proclaims God's dealings with men and His many various utterances. It is indeed the history of His Word. Yet

there are people who speak, and evidently think, as if the Word were only local and occasional.

For example, some would seem to have concluded that Jesus Christ came on earth to denounce and condemn everything then existing, said, or done, excepting the virtues in their very simplest form. This was not the case; and it would indeed have been strange if it had been the case, when one remembers that the 'Word' had had free course and an actual life in both Jew and Gentile for thousands of years. Our Lord did not denounce the priests, for the only passage in which a slur seems to be thrown on the priesthood is in the parable, or incident, of the Good Samaritan. He did not denounce the Romans as a nation, and it was love that prevailed in his lamentation over the approaching downfall of Jerusalem. It has often been observed that our Lord did not denounce the Essenes, then undoubtedly a distinct and prominent sect of the Jews, including some varieties of teaching and practice. He did not denounce the philosophers, who abounded all over the world, and who were always to be found wherever there was a Greek or a Roman. He did not denounce art, or science, or literature, or research of any kind, as many religious people think it necessary to do in these days. In all our Lord's acts and words there can be found no reason why a man should not follow all the ordinary pursuits of an English gentleman, nobleman, or statesman. Our Lord did not denounce soldiers,

or commerce, or trade, except when they profaned God's House; or putting out money to interest, or making a moderate use of any of God's gifts, or dress, which in those days was the folly of men rather than of women. By deed and by word, and by still more speaking silence, he laid an eternal stigma on the vulgar and usurping Herod. In fuller tones he reprobated the hypocritical Pharisees, the mendacious Scribes, and the straw-splitting lawyers, for all these were intruders into His own office and sovereignty. In all these instances, as in many others, the Word had reached the persons or whole classes named, though received into the heart and mind in some cases, not in others.

Again, it has frequently been maintained, in both a friendly and unfriendly tone, that Christianity is as old as the Creation. No believer can object to that statement, though he may to some of the senses and inferences put upon it. The Word was in the beginning, and Christ is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. When, in the fulness of time, the Son did come, it was to fulfil the Law, and not the Law of Moses only, but all laws and rules of life and government, as, for example, the laws of Rome, as far as they were good. God is the Author and Giver of all good things. There can be no good thing without His giving it, nor can it be used without His continual aid. It is through His Word that Parliaments make laws and people obey them. It is through His Word

that fashion lays down rules, and expectant populations hasten to comply. In the hearts of all men there is some idea, some feeling, of what is right. It is no novelty, no discovery, that people may differ very much without quite ceasing to be Christians and having much in common. A large part of the charm of history and of the power of human action would be taken away if we once could come to believe races and generations radically different, as if it were one sort of man here and another there. For myself, I feel it a matter of Christian jealousy to contend for the universality of God's Word in the heart of man—that is, of the Divinely moved conscience of man. There must be always something to work upon, something for the preacher to appeal to, something for the statesman to reckon upon in his grave and manifold hindrances and perplexities.

LVII

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

If the first verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews be compared with those of St. John's Gospel and first Epistle, they will be found to describe differently Him who took our nature and dwelt among us. They who are so disposed will call these inconsistencies, and they will proceed to infer that both descriptions cannot be true. They will go on to say that most probably neither is true, and that the whole matter is one of opinion, or interpretation, or mere fancy. This, however, is not the way in which candid and sensible people reason about seeming inconsistencies in human affairs. They know very well that statements apparently very unlike may be equally true and contain the same truth, and that the inconsistencies themselves are often the strongest marks of truth. It is fiction, not truth, that is elaborately shaped and polished, cleared of difficulties, and carefully planned to carry out the original idea.

But, before I pass on to these seeming inconsistencies, I must say a word or two on the authorship of both of the writings ascribed to St. John, and of

the Epistle to the Hebrews, usually ascribed to St. Paul. Very early there was a question, which is a question still, whether it was not the Elders of Ephesus, or some disciples and personal friends, who wrote the Gospel of St. John and one or two of his Epistles. It is urged that the beloved disciple is described by St. Luke as unlearned and ignorant; that he was only a fisherman, and not a theologian or a philosopher; and that, even if living, he must have been very aged when these books were written. I will not dwell on these questions, and will content myself with observing that I do not see why a fisherman, who, in his youth, had been for several years our Lord's most loved companion, and had spent many years among good and learned disciples, should not acquire the power of writing what now passes under his name; and that I cannot think it matters much whether St. John wrote it himself, or whether it was written by others from fresh recollections.

Again, it is urged that the Epistle to the Hebrews is too argumentative, too rhetorical, too artificially designed, too literary in its form and style for St. Paul to have written it, though nobody doubts that it is substantially what he would say on the subject. Accordingly, it has been suggested and argued that Apollos, or some other friend, wrote it at the request of St. Paul and with his assistance.

The theory is that they conversed often on those topics, and that St. Paul, finding himself and his friend

quite at one about them, and his friend very zealous upon them, commissioned him to write an epistle which would be as good as if he had written it with his own hand. For my own part I do not think this matters much; and will only add that even practised writers and speakers do write very differently at different times and under special circumstances, the same man writing sometimes elaborately and sometimes not, having leisure in one case and not in the other.

Let us take St. John's teaching first:—

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. . . . That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.'

With these passages let us compare the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews :—

'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when he had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.'

The writer then proceeds to apply to Jesus Christ passages in the Psalms, as they certainly had been applied by the Jewish Church for ages to the Messiah, the promised Deliverer and King.

Thus, in St. John, Christ is the Word, the Light of life, of truth, of holiness and goodness to all, ever and everywhere willing to receive it. In the Epistle to the Hebrews He is the Son, surpassing all the angels, indeed past compare. The two titles 'Word' and 'Son' certainly suggest very different ideas, but there is nothing said of the one that is not said of the other. Both represent the infinite perfections of the Father manifesting His glory and His brightness. By or through both, it is said, God made the world, and by or through both are all things upholden and governed. Of both it is said that they existed before

the worlds, and will for ever. Are these one and the same? We have to suppose that these writers (St. Paul writing from Italy, about the year 60, and St. John from Ephesus, many years after) spoke of one and the same Lord and Master, as they had severally apprehended Him, and as, indeed, He had been revealed to them. Both 'Word' and 'Son,' applied to One said to be of God, are not terms within mortal comprehension. If it be alleged that they cannot be called the same in matters within our comprehension, it is impossible to say they are not the same in a sphere wholly beyond it.

But if we feel any serious perplexity on the matter it is sufficient to observe that all God's dealings with the world before Christ consisted of messages, promises, warnings, predictions, laws, commands, judgments, and such secondary teaching and example as there might be in the exemplary life of a good man here or there. Throughout the Old Testament there is a remarkable absence of characters who could be set up as models, or who could naturally win love and draw imitation. Upon the whole it is a grim and dreary record, affording little rest for the soul or home for the sentiment. There was little flesh, as St. John uses the word, in that revelation. If we could suppose Christ not coming, or lingering, there might have been some feeble, ineffective crosses between the Hebrew and the Greek philosophy, both already rather down in the world. But there was nothing

strong enough, or live enough, to stand up and defy the mighty conquerors and emperors of the human race. The Word of God, the Son of God, did this, and from the day He hung on the Cross He has been the true Conqueror and Monarch of the world.

From that day the conception of God, that is, the idea of God and of His proper service, has undergone a greater change than could have been effected by many ages of controversy, by patriarchs, lawgivers, priests, prophets, and kings, succeeding one another for countless generations. On the very face of history, it is impossible to deny that the Word has taken flesh, or that the Son has become Heir of all things. We may see this with our own eyes, and hear it with our own ears, and have the evidence of our own senses corroborated by certain information through thousands of channels from all parts of the world. Such being the plain and simple matter of fact, let us essay to penetrate one instant behind the screen that hides the Omnipotent from mortal vision and conception. All that we can do is to realise that which we believe, if indeed we do believe in one Omniscient Almighty. It is that Almighty who does and says everything that is done or said by prophet, messenger, inspired servant, or only son. However we may understand the Mediator, there can be no doubt of the Original; though it is plain He has not framed us to rest there or the world to remain what it is.

LVIII

THE WORD BY THE MINISTRY OF GOD'S SERVANTS

THAT which I have said in the comparison of the Old Testament characters with the Only Son of God is true, indeed, too true, of all the other persons conspicuous in history and literature, nay, even in the New Testament. In the long list of really great and good men it is impossible to find any that can be thoroughly loved, reverenced, and trusted—taken, one may say, into the heart and mind. All have their faults, serious faults, or faults that stand in the way of our sympathy and confidence. Many of them represent a cause, a faction, a dynasty, a principle of government, a science or an art; some are poets, dramatists, historians, or philosophers; some are great soldiers or statesmen; but, go where we will, we find none we should willingly choose for our friend and guide, or for an example of life.

So universal is error, of one sort or another, in the life and opinions of even very great men, that it has been urged, not without some justice, that great men are not to be judged by common rules, but are to be

allowed a special immunity. Perhaps the notion is that the greatness of their mission, or the more than human fire that moves them, is too much for that careful conscientiousness which may be demanded from lower or less fiery natures.

So it is, however; all these men, dear as they are to our national pride, or to our sentimental leaning, and necessary to our enjoyment, are far from being ideal men, or even quite good men in our estimation. There is not one we could affect to make our model, unless we were prepared to encounter much ridicule. With regard to the greater number, we know very little about them.

Even when we come to great and good men of a recent date, we become painfully aware that they are dressed-up characters, mere lay figures, with much garniture of flattery and invention. Even modern biographers will adopt the foolish notion of suppressing everything that they think might tell against a man or might not be understood; every weakness of principle, every infirmity of tongue or temper, even if it has led to serious quarrels, and disabled a man from discharging his first duties.

After all, one may be justly gratified to find that a man described as superhuman was only a man like ourselves, with his odd ways, his foibles, his pettinesses, his prejudices, his likes and his dislikes. The relief felt is not at the discovery that the man is less than he was described, but because he is found to have

been a real man, not painted on canvas. As we do not find perfection in mortals, so we do not expect it, and are offended at the mere ascription.

We admire these men, and we go to their books or their memorials for recreation or instruction ; we go to them, or may go to them all, as messengers from the throne of Divine wisdom and goodness, conveying precious gifts to those who can receive them. But there is scarcely even the likelihood of our worshipping these angels and being reprehended for our idolatry. Who would for a moment think of taking Shakespeare, or Milton, or Dryden, or Pope, or Goldsmith, or Byron, as a model of life or an adviser in difficulties ? Johnson is, perhaps, more likely than any of them to be so appropriated, but we should think the man mad that did it.

As for our preachers and divines, of course each sect and school will have its worthy, but it will not be as a model. It would be invidious and it is unnecessary to say a word against men to whom we owe so much ; but if they are interesting characters at all, which very few are, they are interesting only to a small circle whose interests happen to be bound up with theirs.

But it is by personal narratives that the heart is chiefly moved. The reader, or the hearer, must be brought into relation, and as it were into the very presence, of real men and women. It requires the highest gifts in the preacher, and the most childlike spirit in

the hearer, to bring that hearer to receive even Christ as his personal Friend.

As few can do this, and unhappily few ever attempt it, there has come up lately a new style of Christian instruction, which bodes ill for the truth and the Gospel. The kind ladies and gentlemen who undertake to supply the exceedingly small modicum of religious instruction thought necessary for poor children, shut up the Bible, New and Old alike, and engage the attention of the Sunday School class with pretty stories of good people who may or may not have existed in the flesh, and who may or may not have been as described. The young critics, it is said, are quite sick of the Sermon on the Mount, and such parts of the New Testament as have been selected for public elementary purposes, as being impersonal, and even neutral—nay, as the children themselves have come to discover, good for nothing at all.

Here, then, is the admission that the Word, that is, the voice of God, can only come to us effectively through a person, a life, an example, a work done for us, a communion established with us, and actual obligations laid upon us. If the Bible be excluded, or only called upon here and there, then the life, the example, and the work will soon disappear. For the persons are substituted shadows ; for the example, showy pictures ; for the life, fictitious stories ; for the solemn warnings, idle reflections—in a word, any

bubbles that may please the eye, any tune that may tickle the ear, any phrase that may impose on the understanding. Such is the degradation we are inevitably bringing on ourselves when we allow the Word of Life, the Only-Begotten Son of God, who for us died and rose again, to be turned out of our schools.

There was a time when humanity suddenly found itself, so it believed, more than mortal. Its power was unbounded; its resources inexhaustible; its reign over the inhabited earth; its chiefs demigods; its unity as sure as the revolving heavens, and its destiny as eternal. Its capital was Rome, the most beautiful of all things, as a poet lovingly expressed it. A great English poet of this century deplored that he did not live in that age, and share its glories, even with its crimes.

But they who best estimated those glories and most enjoyed those delights felt also most keenly and most bitterly that all this was passing away. The greatest, the wisest, and the best would one day have to quit the family, the friendly circle, the hoarded wine, the garden, and the trees themselves had planted, the hated cypress alone appearing in the last obsequies. Yet these things are what men call real, and imagine to be constant, solid, and true. They have indeed all passed away; all that unity is fallen to pieces; all that grandeur is no more. In that wreck and ruin there stands One alone, Heir of that kingdom, that power, and that glory

LIX

ANGELS

NO one can dwell long on the mystery of the Word without coming to feel it his duty to form definite notions of the ministry of the Angels. I believe there are people who think this a subject to be avoided. They do not see the necessity of angels when God's word is enough, and when He can be addressed without any intervention. It is not enough that we abstain from worshipping angels; we must not even address them, so far as to ask their aid. As matters are in this country I should not myself feel in a condition to advocate the invocation of angels, which at best can only be the incidental adjunct of a higher and more directly authorised invocation. But, as a simple matter of fact, angels do make much appearance in the Bible, New Testament as well as Old—they do discharge important duties; they are invested with immense powers for the work they have to do, and there is not one single word even to suggest that, having done their work and served their day, they are now off the scene. So far from this being the case, the immediate and necessary service of angels to the

individual believer is much more distinctly stated and seriously impressed in the New Testament than in the Old.

Many questions can be raised, or at least have been raised, as to the various messengers of weal or of woe to God's servants and people under the old dispensation, insomuch that some scholars tell us confidently that the Jews imported angels into their system from their masters at Nineveh and Babylon. As this opinion has found favour in some unexpected quarters, it is next asked whether the fact of the *Logos* having come from the Greeks disqualifies it from denoting the Son of God, and being a Divine Person. But though we put controversy out of the question, we cannot put angels out of the question without discrediting the whole Gospel narrative. Everything we are told about the Almighty and His operations points to infinite agency in infinite degrees. The argument that we neither see angels, nor are able to conceive what they are like, nor to be sure of their interference with us, can have no weight with those who believe in God at all, or in anything unseen. No person in the whole Bible is so foretold, announced, heralded, assisted, escorted, comforted, ministered to, and served in many ways, as our Lord, and the like services, though in various degrees, are continued to His Apostles.

There is no declaration in the whole Bible more serious or fuller of authority than that every Christian, however humble, has angels specially charged with

his welfare, and still beholding the face of our Heavenly Father, and so in His presence. Now this is what Christians believe 'the Word' does for them, so they are at some loss to understand why angels are wanted in the matter. We have no right to entertain any such difficulty. If God is pleased, and Christ is pleased, to employ angels as He employs apostles and evangelists, priests, deacons, and many other agencies and means, it is to our loss, or at our peril, that we demur to accept the service. The Greeks and Romans had also their guardian angels in the form of every man's own genius, a prevalent idea, on which much has been written. As some describe it, the genius was a man's own proper form or self, up to which he had to develop, but which was yet sufficiently distinct to advise him as a friend and even serve him against his rivals and foes. Men were said to quail before such a one's ascendant genius, which they felt, though they could not see or hear.

But this notion of a certain genius, or better self, up to which any good man was growing, and which at once advised and protected a man, was rather a preparation for the true growth and formation in Christ. The Christian is promised in the most explicit terms that he shall dwell in Christ and Christ in him, and that his whole nature shall be conformed to that new indwelling. Any humble Christian must feel that something next to a miracle, if not a miracle indeed, is necessary to a change that can be so de-

scribed ; but there stands the promise that Christ shall be formed in us, if we receive Him.

I must be allowed to say that the idea of angelic ministry, always at hand, and possessed of great powers, has often occurred to me as meeting a difficulty, which is not a real difficulty, but which human nature cannot but feel. It is difficult, I say, to conceive the Creator and Upholder, and continual Mover of the whole universe condescending frequently to give some intimation, in the nature of an omen or oracular expression, to warn, or advise, or encourage, or stir, as may be. If every breath I draw, and every pulse my heart beats, and every drop of blood that flows in my veins is what it is and does what it does by the immediate action of the Almighty, there is no absolute necessity that I should suppose Him to need an angel to do me some useful service. But it is not for us to determine whether an angel be necessary. I can only say that the supposition of angelic guides greatly assists the belief in actual Divine interference, and I can only be thankful to have my belief in the ever-present Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, so assisted.

LX

VITAL ACTION RELATIVE AND RECIPROCAL

ALL things that we know of, whether in the natural or in the spiritual world, are relative and reciprocal. There is no such thing as an independent existence, complete in itself, or only performing one part in the great Exchange. If we are in proper and healthy action, every organisation—nay, every atom—is giving and receiving, doing and being done by, active and passive. But as all things are in relation to all things, these offices are circuitous, and we are at once debtors and creditors to all creation. The Almighty Giver of all good gifts cannot really owe anything to any of His creatures, for He cannot receive anything from them which He has not given them for this very purpose, and which He has not Himself prompted them to give. The creature owes to the Creator both the gift, the power to give it, and the will. Nevertheless the Almighty is pleased to display Himself as one both gratified and benefited, and is pleased to grant to the donor the sense of giving a pleasure and conferring a boon. In such a matter, it is easy for anyone led by vanity and conceit to mistake his part

like a rude or officious person at a grand ceremonial. He may easily be thinking so much of himself as to think but little of those before him, or those about him, and to fancy himself the one for whom all these honours are intended, or at least the one most to be considered.

The plain fact is that we can do nothing of ourselves—we cannot love, we cannot even fear, we cannot entertain the sentiment of duty, except by a certain thrill of Divine mercy touching our hearts, and moving them to the sensation and the consequent action. Whether it be a command, or an impulse, or an encouragement, or a strengthening, or what our old writers called a comforting, the force and the direction or object of that force come from God. It may all be lost upon us, and we may make no more return than a block of stone makes to the sun that shines on it, and the rain that moistens its surface for a while. This is the Word, which, like the good seed of the sower, grows as the heart of man is ready to receive it.

The Greek, before he had gained some glimpses of the kingdom to come, knew little of such a Word as this, or such a sower. His gods were now marble statues, and his holy days were holidays. He had to conjure up from the depths of his inner consciousness a grand unity, which in his case was more human than divine, comprehending all the relations and offices man had, or might have, with the power or

powers above him, as well as those that man had with man. This was the Heathen Word. It was quite unavoidable that all the origin, all the life, all the impulse, all the direction in the idea of the Heathen Word was from below—that is, from man. The philosophers were indeed so many Titans piling rock upon rock, to scale, if possible, the heights of Olympus. Athens could already boast that it was the most cherished seat of the gods, the very vestibule of Heaven. The philosophers would go higher still, by planting word upon word, and compacting human ideas into a Divine formation.

They did not ascend to Heaven, but Heaven came down to them, and accepted their Word among the titles of the Son. But that which came up and that which came down were equally the act of the Almighty, who Himself waked the Heathens from their dreamy sleep, and guided them out of the labyrinth in which they had lost themselves. What they had long looked for they at last found, and who shall deny that the curiosity was Heaven-inspired, and that Heaven directed to the result? We have found Him whom poets and philosophers tell of, they might say, as truly as the honest Galileans found Him whom the Law and the Prophets spoke of. In both cases the results depended on the preparedness and the unfettered will of the Jew and the Greek. It rested with the Jew to work his deliverance from the bondage of the Law and his own hard worldliness,

and with the Greek to extricate himself from the false lights of human philosophy, from a captivating mythology, from the darkness of materialism, and from the slough of sensuality. After much comparing of notes, and weighing of symbols, and study of what may be called the grammar of Theology, it was concluded that the Word which came from above and the Word that only claimed an earthly origin, and indeed had once boasted it, were the same, and that to receive the Word and to search for it were alike the gift of God and the exercise of free will in man.

LXI

CONCLUSION

We have to end much as we began—indeed, where we began. That is the usual result of any serious inquiry, whether it be for the salvation of souls or for doctrinal definition. It is a never-ending, still-beginning work. In good husbandry you find yourself some way advanced in next year's course before you have finished this year's. The most ancient emblem and figure of eternity was a snake swallowing its own tail, and in that way returning to itself. But, in a matter concerning our souls, we ought at least to come to stronger, and deeper, and even more definite impressions. The careless and irreligious may have good words on their tongues, and grand ideas in their heads, and may even know more than anybody about them can teach them, but be really neither better nor wiser for it. We have to go over the ground often and very seriously, indeed as if we had never been on it before.

In the present inquiry we have started with the fact, which we cannot permit to be disputed, that our wills are free; that we can entertain questions; that

we know the good from the evil; that we can form good intentions, adhere to them, and carry them out; that we can arrive at a fair estimate of other wills and intentions, at least as far as answers a good purpose; and that we stand in the presence of an Almighty Being who possesses in an infinitely larger and higher degree all the powers and all the good qualities that man can lay claim to. This is God. We do not think there is war in Heaven, divided powers, disputed successions, debatable grounds, points of controversy, ex-dynasties, pretenders, leaguers, or any person or any thing with inherent power to dispute the sovereign authority.

Each one of us is the humblest conceivable unit in the presence of the Almighty—indeed, contained in Him, and penetrated by Him to the innermost recess of our heart and the secret chamber of our will. No power of thought, no intensity of purpose, no vigour of determination, no subtlety of contrivance, can escape that which is everywhere. With this basis, as it were—that is, with the finite and the infinite intelligence confronting one another, it is impossible to escape the inference that they are in continual communication on the matters most concerning our highest interests. Any reasonable opinion of the Almighty must include that He cares for us, that He values our imperishable and impressionable natures infinitely higher than that which fades with the flower and perishes with the brute. We cannot doubt that

the Author of all good affections can and does speak to us and move us. In fine, we cannot doubt that He sends His Word to us in that way and form that best suits the purpose.

It is evident, too, that to force our natures and overrule our choice—to make us good whether we wished it or not, and so in spite of ourselves—would reduce us to the condition of domestic creatures, which are but soulless pets and the toys of the passing hour. No reasonable person can consistently maintain that the human beings present to our senses, presented to us in history, and to all appearance mixed up with our own lives, are not real and independent vitalities like ourselves, in the possession of free wills and great powers. God there is, and must be—a God of goodness, justice, and truth. We cannot doubt that He is in continual communication with all mankind for their good.

Nor is this conclusion the least contrary to the appearance; for a certainty, all have a faculty—a sense, a spiritual organ, or whatever else it may be called—for receiving, and understanding, and feeling continual messages from the Source of all goodness. This is the conscience, which knows itself that God is in itself, which knows the Word, which knows its voice, which obeys or not as it pleases. Nature itself—that is, material nature, or that physical frame which is ever linked with ourselves and a sharer of our present troubles—has its changes and moods, being

sometimes dull and lifeless, and apparently unable of itself to emerge from depression and gloom. So it may be with our spiritual nature; but the spirit is still there, and the Father of Spirits still ready to enliven and invigorate us. In all spiritual life His Word still comes. Then in what form? In form and manner inconceivable, known only to those who look for it, and who hang, as it were, on the eyes and the mouth of the Master. Whatever reminds us of God and our duty to Him is the Word of God. Sometimes these reminders have been, as became the occasion, awful, formal, ceremonious, in the sacred language of prophecy, or interpretations, dreams, omens, oracles, miracles, and whatever can astonish or affect. More usually it has been the still small voice, heard alike by kings, prophets, priests, and people.

More was wanted when a world had to be converted and was ripe for it. The Word had come simply as the Word, the communicator of God's will to man, through messengers of recognised authority. At length it was no more a messenger, or a simple message, or a being representing some single or exceptional act or work. It was no longer an ambassador charged with special affairs, and invested accordingly with special powers. All the world had to be brought into one brotherhood, and embraced into one actual sonship. The Word of God, in a sense transcending all former communication of the Word, was now God's only-begotten Son—Son

above all other sons, doing a work beyond all other works, manifesting at once the Deity, which of itself would be a representation, but also perfected and glorified humanity. That Word, that work, must be a mystery; but God is a mystery, and so is Man —not merely the men we look on, but the men we know in our own selves.

If anyone will take the trouble to think about it, he will see that the question of an Almighty in personal communication with us is not a single or separate question. It is one of innumerable questions; it is inseparably associated with them; and it is the sum of them all. There is nothing whatever of which we may not ask how it comes to be there, what it really is, how it comes to have forces and to obey laws, and whether it have any existence at all beyond our own conception of its existence. These may be simply curious questions as regards what we call matter, and very dispensable questions as regards common animal life, but they are important and vital when we come to our own fellow-creatures, partakers of the glorious and mysterious gift of humanity.

Every human being, ourselves included, presents a problem, indeed many problems, beyond the reach of the senses and incapable of mathematical solution: but our happiness, our success, our rising and falling, our standing in the eye of God and man, our place for all eternity, depend on having true ideas of the human beings we have to deal with and proper regards to-

wards them. Whatever they are in the sight of God, they are bound to be in our sight also. In His sight they are not the dust flying before the wind ; they are not counters in a game ; they are not units in a calculation of physical strength or commercial profit ; they are not figures in a passing pageant ; they are not the constituents of a numerical popularity ; they are not the victims of either law or caprice. They have all within them a spiritual existence of which we cannot say whence it came or whither it will go, or what further development awaits it under new conditions. These questions we may ask of ourselves, and ought to ask. We know no more of ourselves than we do of others, unless it be some particulars not so much of ourselves as of our circumstances.

This just appreciation of our fellow-creatures in their respective relations to us, and this recognition of their claims, is necessary to a proper discharge of our duties to them. We cannot do our duty to them if we hate or despise them ; if we give them no thought whatever ; if we are wilfully deaf to their just complaints ; if we cheat them or mislead them for selfish ends ; if we allow smaller matters to stand in the way of permanent duties. But, in every step of this life-struggle between contending influences, we are brought face to face with an Almighty Being who points one way, when our weak nature or perverted will would lead us another. If we admit a Divine call, and render it due obedience, we are thereby led continually

to a stronger belief in Him whom we trust and follow. If we leave ourselves at the mercy of our own idle folly or stray affections, it must be to the loss of our own Divine relation and being, and we must eventually cease to know that Word which we have only heard to set at naught.

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